

Gender Interplay in Nonnos' *Dionysiaka*

The cases of Deriades and Aura

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis presents the relation between the gendered language of Nonnos and the ironic undertones he employs to describe two main plot points in the *Dionysiaka*. I focus on Dionysos' battle with Deriades, the Indian king, and Aura, the titan goddess of the breeze. In my first section, I argue that the irony employed to describe the death of Deriades is based on misperceptions of gender identity as he understands the world. Due to his fixity on the masculine extreme of the gender spectrum, Deriades has created a skewed view of the world which led to his demise by the gender-fluid Dionysos. His false perception is reflected in the text when Athena disguises herself as Morrheus, Deriades' son-in-law, and comes to taunt him for fleeing the battle with Dionysos. Athena is herself a gender-fluid goddess as the masculine virgin goddess of Truth/Wisdom. Her disguise symbolises the loss of true understanding. For my second section, I examine the implications of the total loss of gender identity as experienced by Aura. Her identification as a masculine female skews her perception of the world and results in committing a crime of hubris against Artemis. Her masculinised persona leads her to become the voyeur of Artemis. Artemis herself is a gender-fluid goddess due to her masculine attributes as huntress. But she is mainly the goddess of female sexuality and its potential to produce life. Aura's crime against Artemis is symbolically a crime against femininity itself. Her punishment for her voyeurism is to be raped by Dionysos and become a mother. Motherhood symbolises the realisation of femininity which Aura despises. Yet her rape is not the only punishment she receives. Indeed, I argue that her punishment also includes becoming the voyeur of herself and then becoming the object of voyeurism for eternity when she is turned into a spring.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Sophie and Peter.

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Introduction

Using two case-studies from the *Dionysiaka*, I will argue that Dionysos' gender fluidity is a strength in his success. The length of this project disallows a detailed exploration of Dionysos' gender fluidity throughout the entire *Dionysiaka*. I have instead chosen two key episodes to focus upon. These two passages are representative of Dionysos' gender identity throughout the text and are significant for the overall plot.

In his *Dionysiaka*, Nonnos relates the story of how Dionysos, through a series of difficult tasks ascends to Olympus and becomes immortal. Besides the notable conquest of the Indians, Dionysos also spreads his worship wherever he goes. Indeed, the poem relates how he shares the knowledge of viticulture, a key factor of his worship; wine, among other things, was believed to have the power to alleviate human suffering which is why it was held as sacred¹. Yet this text seems to present Dionysos as soft and feminine and at the same time as *actively* achieving his goal. The poem relates how through the use of the items of his worship Dionysos overcomes the other-worldly, hyper-virile male aggression of the Indian chieftains and rapes the female figures to which he is attracted. This thesis will examine Nonnos' representation of the god as both a feminine and masculine deity, and also one who becomes a forceful and formidable conqueror².

Yet, Dionysos is to be understood in a gendered context on his own and in relation to the gendered representation of his two main adversaries. His main male adversary, Deriades, is characterised by hyper-masculinity, while his main female adversary, Aura, is characterised by gender transgression; her masculine traits lead her to a gendered self-identification which cannot be allowed to exist, as is reflected in her excessive punishment. While on the other hand, Deriades'

¹ For the qualities of wine cf. Seaford 2006: 15-18.

² For Dionysos' femininity and the hyper-virile qualities of his Indian opponents, see Hadjitoffi 2016: 135-38.

excessive masculinity is eradicated almost as an afterthought. In order to understand these two key episodes of the poem, I suggest that Aura and Deriades' gender misconceptions are punished by three beings of fluid gender identities, i.e. Dionysos, who is assisted by Athena, and Artemis. I claim that Nonnos' preoccupation with gender is reflected in his writing style. Indeed, the language he employs to describe the scene of Deriades' death is suffused with irony, while he also relies heavily upon plot devices centered around deception/disguise for both the Deriades and Aura episodes. For Aura's punishment, gendered language pointedly describes her transformation. Aura is not able to accept her physical body and thus is led to commit a crime against Artemis, who represents femininity. In Nonnos' world, Aura embodies a theomachic monster (like Deriades) and an important sexual conquest (like Nikaia). Deception is the literary device employed by Nonnos to bring about Aura's demise, when he describes how she came upon the spring of wine and was deceived into drinking it. Irony and deception/disguise thus become intertwined with notions of gender identity³.

The two episodes of particular importance to this paper can further be categorised as follows: Dionysos against Deriades in book 40. 1-100, is a *theomachy*, while Dionysos against Aura in 48. 590-651, is a *theogamy*. The former asserts the martial – explicitly masculine – abilities and accomplishments of Dionysos. The defeat of Deriades is part of a larger narrative regarding the life of Dionysos and the enemies he has had to face, identified as a *theomachy*. In her chapter for the *Brill's Companion to Nonnus of Panopolis*, F. Hadjitoffi uses the term *theomachies* to describe not the battle between gods, but the battle between mortals and a god; i.e. mortals

³ There are similar undertones of irony when Nonnos describes the deaths of Deriades with those of Morrheus (39. 354-6) and Orontes; both of them were defeated by Dionysos and his thyrsus with minimal effort. Orontes, in fact, kills himself out of shame for having his armor destroyed when 'with the viny cluster he (Dionysos) tapped him on his chest gently' (17. 263-4).

opposing a certain god and his worship, discrediting him and denying that he is divine⁴. Although successful on the battlefield, Dionysos' divinity is suspect because of his feminine appearance⁵. The second episode asserts Dionysos' erotic abilities and accomplishments – again, explicitly masculine – thus contrasting with his effeminate appearance during his *theomachies*. The erotic episode describes the way Dionysos overcomes the Titan Aura. It is part of another larger narrative that permeates the *Dionysiaka*: that of *theogamies*. These are defined as those erotic narratives which describe the way in which gods sexually conquer female figures⁶. These two episodes, Dionysos' conquest of Deriades and Aura, will be considered as two case-studies in order to understand the tensions of gender within the text.

I will ultimately argue that Dionysos, for all his supposed femininity, defeats those who oppose him in a very masculine way. On the one hand, Dionysos defeats Deriades using a phallic symbol, his thyrsus. On the other hand, he sexually conquers Aura using another element of his worship, wine. Indeed, she is overcome by sleep after she consumes wine before Dionysos rapes her. I aim to explore the tension between his outward femininity and the successful use of his symbolic and literal phallus. By defeating Deriades with the thyrsus (the symbolic phallus), and by sexually overcoming Aura (the literal phallus) Dionysos faces his enemies in a masculine way,

⁴ Hadjitoffi 2016: 135n. 41.

⁵ Cf. the words by Orontes, a chieftain of the Indian forces and one of Dionysos' main opponents, in Book 17. 185-9: [...] Οὗτος ὁ θῆλυν ἔχων ἀπαλὸν χροῖα, πάντας ἑάσσας | Ἴνδοὺς τοσσατίους ἐνὶ μάρναο μῶνον Ὀρόντη. | Ἡδὺς ὁ δινεύων κεχαλασμένα βόστρυχα χαίτης, | ἡδὺς ὁ Βασσαρίδων ἐρόεις πρόμος· ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐταὶ | κάλλει τοξεύουσι καὶ οὐ βελέεσσι γυναῖκες. [...]; [...] 'You there, with the soft skin, leave all those Indians and fight with the one Orontes. Sweet one who waves the slackened curls on his head here and there, sweet one the charming champion of the Bassarids; but indeed the women too throw prettiness and not arrows.' [...]. This accusation serves to demean and belittle Dionysos in an attempt to overcome him; it also illustrates Orontes' inability to comprehend that someone with the soft appearance of Dionysos can pose a serious threat to him. Also, cf. the way Pentheus challenges him even after Dionysos returns victorious from the East in order to spread his worship in Greece in 44. 134; there he calls him θῆλυν ἀλήτην, a 'woman-like wanderer'. See also, earlier than Nonnos, in Euripides' *Bakchai* 45, where Pnetheus is explicitly said to 'battle the god' (θεομαχεῖ). For a more detailed analysis of *theomachies* and their role in the *Dionysiaka*, cf. Hadjitoffi 2016: 135-43.

⁶ Hadjitoffi 2016: 143-4; also cf. her note at 143n71 where she points to F. Vian 1994a: 86, who discussed the importance of the succession of *theogamies* as punctuating the poem.

even though he is seen as effeminate. Indeed, scholars have noted time and again Dionysos' power to move within the spectrum of gender⁷. This quality of Dionysos, though a traditional one of the god, points to important nuances for the interpretation of the *Dionysiaka*. But that which is important for this paper is that his gender fluidity cannot be understood by those who operate under gender extremes, because it scares them. As we shall see, Deriades cowers away from Dionysos. On the other hand, even when he is not seen by his enemies, Dionysos has the ability to drive them mad. When Aura cannot accept that she has been tricked by him, she wanders the earth aimlessly in a frenzy. Dionysos' ability to blur the lines is reflected both in his gender-fluid nature and his invention of wine.

Indeed, Dionysos seems to be credited with femininity yet behaves in the typical manner as a male mythological figure; the way feminine and masculine figures act in erotic mythic narratives differ⁸. This paper thus considers the implications of this paradox in Dionysos' identity as a god, by examining the two case-studies mentioned above. However, in order to better illustrate any conclusions throughout, I will first define the terms 'sex', 'gender', and 'masculinity' versus 'femininity'. Then, I will briefly consider Dionysos' gender representation in classical antiquity.

⁷ Cf. among others, Dodds 1960: xi-xiv; Otto 1965: 171-80; Carpenter and Faraone (eds.) 1993; Buxton 2009a; Seaford 2006: 15-25; Friesen 2015: 175, and 199-206.

⁸ In myth, when male characters are described as feminine, they do not typically handle any aspect of masculinity; it is almost as if they cannot. Indeed, it could be argued that when male mythological figures are described as 'beautiful', as having κάλλος, it is done by having some feminine traits, like blond hair, or a demure and servile disposition. Cf. the story of Ganymede, in *Iliad* 20. 233-35, for example, where he is said to be so beautiful that the gods could not resist taking him with them and having him as their cup-bearer. Also, cf. the story of Hylas a young boy who was the beloved of Herakles. In Theocritus' *Idyll* 13.36-9, where he is said to have 'blond hair', a marker of beauty, Hylas is described as tending to Herakles and his friend Telamonian Ajax, two mythological figures known for their masculinity. Hylas can do nothing else but cry at the lap of his abductors (lines 53-4), three spring Nymphs, who were so enamoured with him (line 48) that they could not help but attack him and drag him underwater to their lair. Beauty and passivity are often inextricably linked with femininity and it is usually the case that the positions of Ganymede and Hylas are occupied by women (Ganymede displaces Hebe as cup-bearer to the Olympians, whereas Hylas' care for Herakles' meal is a domestic (i.e. wifely) responsibility. Yet when male figures fall in love or are sexually attracted to female figures, they typically sate their desire through rape, assuming a decidedly active role. Zeus' numerous erotic exploits come to mind here. To name but two examples, cf. the story of Danae and how he turned into golden rain to get to her (in Pindar *Pythian Ode* 12. 16ff.); and the story of Europa and how he turned into a beautiful white bull in order to approach her (*Dionysiaka*.1.46-8).

In both of these sections, I will argue that Dionysos is characterised as feminine by others, and thus is assumed as being weak. Far from being negative, however, these misperceptions of weakness help Dionysos assert his dominance, martially and erotically. What is seen is not what is in the *Dionysiaka* and Dionysos encapsulates this as the main character the poem. This is especially highlighted when he clashes with his main male (Deriades) and his main female (Aura) opponents, as we shall see. In order to set the stage for the discussion of my two case-studies, following a brief survey of the theoretical approaches to social constructions of gender, and of the presentation of it in Greek literature, I will discuss Dionysos and his relationship with gender identity. Finally, in the last section of this Introduction, I will briefly discuss the role of gender in the *Dionysiaka* as a whole.

Sex and Gender

Contemporary scholars such as B. Berggren argue that “gender is the performative aspect of sex, but also its manipulable aspect”⁹. With ‘sex’ referring to the biological body, Berggren raises an interesting topic when she asserts that gender is the “manipulable” aspect of sex. The term “manipulable” points to the fact that gender not only defines one’s social behaviour based on their biological body, but it can equally be formed and shaped. Gender is not, in other words, as rigid and clear-cut as its link to the biological body may initially suggest. Indeed, R. T. Hare-Mustin and J. Marecek examine the psychology behind the process by which the social category of gender is constructed. When defining gender roles within a society, the usual practice is to exaggerate the biological differences which exist between men and women and organise an entire system of accepted social behaviour based on those differences. As Hare-Mustin and Marecek

⁹ Berggren 1995: 8.

argue, “gender is an invention of human societies [...] a way of organizing everyday life”¹⁰. By defining the social roles of men and women on the basis of their physiology, i.e. their possession of male or female genitalia, people within a society are influenced in the way they see and understand themselves. In other words, social-gender identification works both from one person towards the collective, as well as from one person towards their own self. Indeed, as H. M. Lips postulates, while ‘sex’ refers to “biological femaleness and maleness”, ‘gender’ refers to “culturally-mediated expectations and roles associated with masculinity and femininity”¹¹.

The use of the word ‘gender’ in this paper follows the definition of Hare-Mustin and Marecek, as well as Lips, outlined above; specifically, ‘sex’ will be used to define and refer to the biological body, ‘gender’ to the social role attributed to individuals, the definition of which derives from their sexed bodies. Additionally, ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ will refer to the social identities men and women form and strive towards within a social context; the ‘social context’ itself will be used in the sense of the πόλις, the city in which men and women live as opposed to animals or gods¹². There are certain normative social constructions of masculinity and femininity, deriving from assumptions based on sex. Indeed, when not used in derogatory contexts, identifying someone or oneself as ‘masculine’ has certain connotations of meaning, such as that the physiology of the person referred to is male. This in turn determines that men have active roles within the community because they are physically stronger. On the other hand, identifying someone or oneself as ‘feminine’ implies the fact that the physiology of the person is female. This in turn

¹⁰ Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1990: 4-5.

¹¹ Lips 2014: 2. Lips, however, also very importantly maintains that ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, though different, are not clearly separated. Rather, it is more the case that these two concepts are intertwined; that one heavily depends upon the other in order to create and delineate identity within the social sphere. As I shall show further on in this Introduction, for the purposes of this paper, I plan to focus on identity issues, as culturally mandated and based on gender.

¹² For the organisation of men and women, of humans, into cities I take my queue from the Prometheus myth as examined by Vernant 1989: 21-86, as well as the societal structures described by Hesiod as examined by Clay 2003: 87-8.

determines that women are passive within the community due to the inherent weakness in the female body; indeed, women's physiology defines them as fit for bearing and giving birth to children and usually does not leave room for any other social role.

Scholars have remarked on various elements of the gendered construction of human society within the ancient Greek and Roman literary tradition as regards the dynamics between 'sex', 'gender', and 'masculine' versus 'feminine'. Since the mid to late 20th century and continuing even more so in our 21st century, classicists have identified problems associated with these normative gender constructs particularly in how they affect the view and treatment of women. S. B. Pomeroy, among others, argues that classical antiquity, despite its splendor, "rationalised [the] confinement of women to the domestic sphere" and has displayed a "systematization of anti-female thought [expressed] by poets and philosophers"¹³. Indeed, this misogynist thought found throughout classical antiquity more or less aligned sex and gender: if a person was biologically female, then culturally that person was weak, passive, and most importantly, only fit for childbirth, subjects to their internal reproductive systems.

The idea that women were half-beings, only alive to carry out the functions of a couple of internal organs, can be traced all the way back to Hesiod and his two didactic epics, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*. Following J.-P. Vernant and M. Detienne, J. S. Clay argues that the Hesiodic model, in which women were created at a later time than the existence of men so as to ensure the continuation of the human species, has deeply influenced the organisation of society, of the πόλις. Γυνή, meant both 'woman' and 'wife', the two English terms being indistinguishable when translating or explaining the Greek. Pandora, the first woman/wife was given to men both as the gift and as the bane of humankind: she, and her successors were a gift which ensured the

¹³ Pomeroy 1975: 230.

continuation of men by giving them the illusion of immortality so that they did not die out or live in vain; but she was also a bane to them because her very existence physically exhausted men to the point where they might die if they spent too much time with them. Men had to toil in order to secure their food and take care of their physically weaker wives who depended on them for their own survival. Women were thus infamously dubbed as a Necessary Evil in the lives of men¹⁴.

That which is pertinent to this paper is the fact that when the gods created Pandora, and in essence the race of women, they created her to be beautiful, and dressed her in finery to be stunning. As it is then, beauty and softness as displayed by Pandora and her race, became the bane of man's existence. As is expressed in the Hesiodic corpus, feminine beauty became a dangerous weapon against men for its ability to inspire lust. It is often in literature that ἔρως, 'love' and/or 'lust', is as dangerous to men as weapons of war are. And this is linguistically expressed in the use of the language of warfare to describe the power of ἔρως¹⁵. It is beauty's power to entice and seduce which causes men grief. But that which is interesting for this paper is the fact that feminine beauty and feminine softness are also marked out and designated in Dionysos by his hyper-masculine opponents. Perhaps that which is left unsaid by Nonnos is the fact that by possessing the allurements of females Dionysos is stronger than his opponents.

Despite this idea of women as weak and duplicitous, classicists have also identified various transgressions between male and female identity. Perhaps most prominently, Athenian drama has provided good examples of male and female gender roles and identities clashing with one another. V. Wohl, among others, argues that tragedy encourages questions of whether or not the divide

¹⁴ For this overview, cf. *Theogony* 585; 589; 591-2, as well as *Works and Days* 67; 82. Also cf. Vernant 1989: 63, where he explains that women were not all that bad since they give men the opportunity to leave something of themselves behind.

¹⁵ For the overlap of martial and erotic language cf. Vernant 1990: 467; Halperin 1990: 270. I will return to this overlap in more detail in the Aura case-study (see n95 of this paper).

between men and women, or better yet the marginality into which women are pushed, is natural or essential. In tragedy, the feminine other is frequently depicted as repressed and unable to conform to the unnatural demands of society¹⁶. Indeed, tragedy showcases inversions, or reversals of gender roles, without necessarily postulating that the biological bodies of those who transgress change according to the transgression. In other words, transgressions of gender roles happen despite the perceived fixity of the biological body. The nature, the essence of the biological sex remains the same, even though the gender role is being questioned.

This can be seen more clearly when we consider characters such as Clytemnestra, the husband slayer in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*; the fifty Danaids, in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, who turned their marriage beds into blood beds (though there is something to be said about the fact that a marriage bed is already a blood bed by the blood spilled from the virgin bride); even the Lemnian women in Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, who established a society without men after killing them all off; all these characters do not turn into men, even though they may be depicted as 'manly'¹⁷. What is more, Athenian drama also provides examples for male characters experiencing or wanting to experience femininity, like Pentheus in Euripides' *Bakkhai*, or Hippolytos in Euripides' *Hippolytos*. The latter especially displays uncharacteristic behaviour when as a man he renounces Aphrodite and prefers to remain chaste dedicating himself to the virgin Artemis.

Moreover, fluid gender roles blur the line between masculinity and femininity. If Clytemnestra can swing an axe to kill Agamemnon, her identity as feminine is compromised; she occupies a liminal space of having a female body (sex), being a mother and a wife (gender), and at the same time acting in decidedly masculine ways, like ruling, taking a consort, or killing (identity). Her identity is complex and multilayered. On the other hand, if Pentheus can be

¹⁶ Wohl 1998: xxxv-vi.

¹⁷ Cf. how Agamemnon disapproves of Clytemnestra's masculine way of speech at *Agamemnon* 916-17.

persuaded temporarily to become a woman, by wearing woman's clothes and outwardly changing his personality in order to accomplish a certain goal, his identity as masculine, which he holds in such high regard, is compromised. Under the influence of Dionysos in disguise, Pentheus loses his identity as a man, even though he does not lose either his sex or his gender (in this case his position as king of Thebes). It is still the man Pentheus, king of Thebes, who puts on feminine clothing and *wants* to see what women do in the wild; what women become when they remove themselves from the πόλις¹⁸. Both Clytemnestra and Pentheus choose to transcend their gender roles, without discarding them altogether. This is where the tension lies; they choose to invert their identity and in so doing, they show theatre audiences how the world of the other is perceived and valued.

Dionysos and Gender

It is interesting to note these transgressions of gender roles which lead to identity inversions within Athenian drama because of the nature of this genre of poetry. These compositions were dedicated to Dionysos himself during one of his most important festivals in Athens, the Great Dionysia. We could perhaps detect a kind of anxiety simmering just under the surface of those who participate in the theatrical act¹⁹. Indeed, the audience were more or less people conformed to their roles within their society; but during the festival of this god they could postulate and consider what happens when societal norms are put aside, ignored, or transcended. The reason they perhaps would enjoy watching Clytemnestra kill Agamemnon, or Pentheus don woman's clothing intent on spying on Bacchic ritual, could be due to the fact that such thoughts, such worries about the

¹⁸ Cf. here Seaford 2006: 49-63 for an analysis of Pentheus' transvestism as being part of Dionysos mystery-cult initiation. Even then, Pentheus is choosing to participate in Dionysiac ritual (even if he does it unknowingly) which dictates the very reversal of gender roles. In order to become a follower of Dionysos, a man must experience the world of women, the world of the female other.

¹⁹ Cf. Zeitlin 1985: 63-94, and 1996: 341-74.

possibility of a wife killing her husband, or a king wanting to dress like a woman, would be purged after seeing it acted out on stage²⁰. As E. C. Keuls has argued, “[...] the emotions purged by drama must have been primarily those ensuing from the alienation of the sexes”²¹. The very content of the plays suggest that societal gender roles were not easily understood or digested; people were thinking about what it meant to be a man or a woman; perhaps they were even fearing that the roles could be reversed.

The reversal of the norm is something closely connected to the essence of Dionysos as a divinity. His liminality challenges normative behaviour and considers the alternative other. As J. Redfield puts it, “Dionysos embodies a kind of marginality at the center”. Redfield argues that unlike Artemis who protects the process of initiation, Dionysos “is a god of intoxication, mania, strangeness, and the theater; his rites are celebrated by adults, especially women, and provide a release from the established order. Artemis is *with* animals; Dionysos *appears to be* animal” (emphasis his)²². More recently, R. Seaford has done extensive work in order to define, or even describe Dionysos’ attributes and what he presided over as a divinity in antiquity. For the most part, Seaford argues, Dionysos was considered to be “the god of wine, or of the unrestrained joys of nature”²³. That which sets Dionysos apart from other ancient Greek deities, however, is the fact that he is often not only associated with the various aspects of his divinity, like wine; he is also identified in them. Dionysos is both represented by the wildness of nature, be it animal or vegetative, and identified in it, i.e. exists within it. He is creator and patron of wine, but he also exists within wine, he is wine; his animal symbols include lions, leopards, and bulls, for example,

²⁰ I should note, however, that scholars disagree on whether Aristotelian κάθαρσις for tragedy is to be understood as a ‘purge’. Cf. Halliwell 2011: 236-66, for example, who speaks of something akin to a rebalancing of emotions.

²¹ Keuls 1985: 348.

²² Redfield 1990: 129.

²³ Seaford 2006: 15-25.

but he also turns into them. The vine is his most sacred plant, but he is also worshipped as the plant itself, not merely symbolised by it. Dionysos exists and is represented by the wildness in nature, the dangerous leopard and the (perhaps more) dangerous vine, as its product influences reason and rationality, that which separates humans from animals. Through the consumption of wine, Dionysos facilitates the communication between the three spheres of existence, namely animal, human, and the divine, by blurring the borders between them. Dionysos has the tools of ἔρωϛ, that is feminine beauty and softness²⁴.

Yet, wine and viticulture are only a fraction of his divine attributes. A mystery-cult was organised under his name; he is found in death, as a dying god and one who guides his initiates in the Underworld, which means he is both Chthonic and Olympian; he is patron of the theatre, as was mentioned above; he inspires madness yet facilitates communality within the πόλιϛ during wine-drinking feasts and the organisation of the theatre performances; he appears in both the Hesiodic and the Orphic tradition²⁵, as son of Zeus and the mortal Semele, in the former, helping to alleviate human suffering with his invention of wine; and as son of Zeus and Persephone, in the latter, destined to take over Zeus' cosmic throne, but killed and dismembered by the Titans, and then later resurrected. This amalgam of opposites has hindered attempts at interpreting his worship; indeed, Dionysos seems to defy any specific definition as to what kind of a god he is. H. S. Versnel argues that Dionysos “was neither ‘different’ nor ‘one’ since he shared the multifariousness of all other gods: like theirs his name covered many identities. However, he was the only classical god who was acclaimed *heis* and it is this ‘oneness’ and its implications that made him different”²⁶.

²⁴ Pasiphae and her utter infatuation with king Minos' bull comes to mind here. This infatuation is indicative of the power of ἔρωϛ. For the mythological story of Pasiphae see Hyginus *Fabulae* 40.

²⁵ See for instance, Hes. *Th.* 938-42 for Dionysos as he was widely known, and Graff and Iles-Johnston 2013: 66-93; and Bernabé and San Cristóbal 2008: 66-75 for his presence in the Orphic texts.

²⁶ Versnel 2011: 44.

H.-J. Gehrke, on the other hand, juxtaposes Versnel's approach to the god, arguing that Dionysos is found in both nature and culture, but that he represents a subversive opposition to culture (i.e. the πόλις), even though he is worshipped there as well²⁷.

A plethora of researchers have dealt with other aspects of the god, and the nature of his female followers. A. Bernabé has shown how recent scholarship has more or less disputed J. Rohde's view about Dionysos being a latecomer to the Greek pantheon²⁸. M. V. Guía tentatively surmises that during the Lenaia, Athenian women would celebrate the dismemberment and rebirth of Dionysos with singing and dancing²⁹. S. P. Caballero points to the historicity of women in ancient Greece modeling themselves on the mythical maenads as they appear in Euripides' *Bakkhai*. Dionysos' complexity and elusiveness are aptly surmised by A. Henrichs in the same volume: Dionysos "is both One and many"³⁰.

But more importantly for this paper, G. S. Gasparro argues that the Orphic Dionysos takes on qualities and identities of other figures in the divine pantheon, both male and female³¹. This paradox of Dionysos' identity as masculine and feminine, is frequently relevant to the interpretation of texts treating Dionysos. For starters, though Dionysos is not described in the sources as changing into a female physically, he does don female clothing when he is initiated into Rhea's mysteries³². This could mean that symbolically he turns into a female. This transgression of his gender (note not his biological sex) will follow him around in various forms: from being accused of (feminine) softness, to accepting women as his followers³³. This fluidity in gender

²⁷ Gehrke 2011: 357-72. Also cf. Gödde 2011: 85-104 for the suggestion that Dionysos may be more aptly considered as a ξένος, and not as the 'other'.

²⁸ Bernabé 2013: 23-37.

²⁹ Guía 2013: 100-19.

³⁰ Henrichs 2013: 554.

³¹ Gasparro 2013: 433-51.

³² Seaford 2006: 53. This information is taken from Apollodoros *Bibl.*3.5.1.

³³ E.g. *Bakkhai*.487. Cf. also Seaford 2006: 47-75 who speaks of the intimacy between Dionysos and his θίασος as detected in tragedy and even in the *Iliad*.6.132-3

identity, i.e. displaying both masculine and feminine behaviour, may be due to his divine nature as presiding over the whole of the ὕγρὰ φύσις³⁴. However, it may be argued that being divine, Dionysos does not technically have a gender, let alone a gendered social role; indeed, by definition of being a god he exists outside of the social structure of the city in which humans live. He is, nevertheless, like the other gods, a construct of human society, or, at the very least, a gendered (however fluid) representation of divinity. It may indeed be the case that through his divinity he regulates gender roles held within a community. Through the use of his divine aspects, Dionysos protects the human psyche when experiencing mortality, by reminding it of the unity of the world and by expecting it to experience, for the duration of his festivals, the role of the Other, be it male or female. And thus, even though any use of the word ‘gender’ to refer to Dionysos is not technically correct, it is more practical to apply it than to come up with other terms. Dionysos himself, in any case, was once half human.

In this light, Nonnos’ representation of Dionysos is not unique; indeed, at first glance he seems to be promoting a form of Dionysos already well-known. However, that which Nonnos does differently regarding Dionysos in his extant text is the way he sets the stage for the god to realise his potential. As we shall see, Nonnos takes type scenes from mythological narratives and completely inverts the reader’s expectations. For instance, he uses an Iliadic model to describe the final battle between Deriades and Dionysos, but thwarts expectations with the way he concludes the episode. In addition, Nonnos uses the huntress-to-hunted mythological type scene to describe the rape of Aura by Dionysos, but again thwarts expectations with how he describes Aura’s reaction. Thus, though his representation of Dionysos is quite typical, the stories we find the god in are what set Nonnos’ Dionysos apart from his representation by other authors.

³⁴ For Dionysos ‘wet nature’ see Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 35, 365 A, where he quotes Pindar, fr. 140 in C. M. Bowra 1964.

Gender in the *Dionysiaka*

Scholarship on gender and its role in the *Dionysiaka* has so far focused on how his hyper-virile enemies view him. Hadjitoffi examines the way Dionysos' accused effeminacy is connected to the theomachic identity of his enemies³⁵. She understands that the effeminate Dionysos brings out the theomachic element in all his opponents; as she suggests, hyper-virility is expressed in the same terms as the theomachic battle known as the Typhonomachy, the battle between Zeus and Typhon. Fayant sees in the effeminate descriptions of Dionysos a common way for authors from Aristophanes to Lucian to employ satire and irony to the treatment of the character. In fact, Fayant notes that in the *Dionysiaka* specifically, the thyrsus itself may also be characterised by effeminate adjectives to the same degrading and ironic effect³⁶. Gigli Piccardi suggests that Dionysos' dancing warfare confuses the reader of the *Dionysiaka* who does not know whether to take Nonnos' description of the battle scene seriously or not³⁷. Miguélez Caveró as well approaches the depiction of the effeminate Dionysos in the same light as Gigli Piccardi; he too sees the effeminacy of Dionysos as a riddle for the reader of Nonnos' text of whether or not the author is being ironic³⁸. To this effect, Frangoulis adds Dionysos' tendency to spare his enemies' lives³⁹. It would seem, whether it is ironic or not, that Dionysos and the way he fights is decidedly removed from the martial warrior of the *Iliad*. In that epic poem we often are treated to martial scenes of gory violence where the heroes pierce their enemies with spears and swords with such vehemence that the

³⁵ Hadjitoffi 2016: 135-43.

³⁶ Fayant 2000: 183. Among the passages in the *Dionysiaka* he notes 14. 396; 17. 250; 23. 68; 29. 227 where the thyrsus is modified by the words *θηλυς*, and *γυναικεῖος*, while 16. 172; 27. 73 where *θηλυς* qualifies Dionysos.

³⁷ Gigli Piccardi 1985: 131-3; and 2003: 78.

³⁸ Miguélez Caveró 2009: 564-66; and 2010: 33.

³⁹ Frangoulis 2012.

weapons shoot clean out from the other side of the point of entry⁴⁰. In the war scenes of the *Iliad* the enemies of the heroes are thoroughly destroyed. Dionysos on the other hand, as I will examine in my first case-study, is not as vicious when he kills Deriades.

However, scholarship has also examined the possibility that the *Dionysiaka* portray several cases of gender reversal power dynamics and the dangers that accompany it. Specifically, Hadjitoffi remarks on the tension between the power of ἔρως and the loss of power for Zeus in Nonnos' text⁴¹. She focuses on the loss of masculinity and hence on the loss of power which Zeus suffers in the Europa passage (1.45 ff.). In this passage, Hadjitoffi remarks on the reversal of the power dynamics between Europa and Zeus and suggests that Nonnos' vocabulary presents Europa as possessing power over Zeus because Zeus has fallen in love with her⁴². But Hadjitoffi examines the way with which ἔρως is detrimental to the males of the *Dionysiaka* and understands this detrimental effect to be a key component of paradoxical procreation; the result, in other words, of the successive theogamies which permeate the poem. Though her research has been essential to my understanding of gender and how it appears in the *Dionysiaka*, Hadjitoffi has not examined the gender power dynamics employed by Dionysos to win against two of his most important enemies: Deriades and Aura. Her emphasis is on the theomachic element of Dionysos' male enemies, and on the products of the theogamies, or rapes, and how they affect the cosmic order as presented in the *Dionysiaka*. Taking my queue from her, I argue that the power of gender-fluidity and gender reversals employed by Dionysos are key factors in ensuring his victory over Deriades and Aura. J. L. Lightfoot sees Aura as both the last of Dionysos' female conquests and the last of his great

⁴⁰ See, e.g., *Il.* 6.10-12.

⁴¹ Hadjitoffi 2016: 145.

⁴² Ibid. See her comments at p.145 on the use of the word ἐπιβήτωρ to describe how Europa mounts Zeus. At this point Zeus has turned into a bull and is allowing Europa to climb on his back. Hadjitoffi focuses on the condescending manner with which Hera speaks describing this scene.

enemies⁴³. She focuses on the story of Aura and her rape by Dionysos as Nonnos' description of a story intended to instill femininity into this hyper-masculine huntress who despises any feminine attributes. She also especially despises being subordinate to male domination and being forced, as she sees it, to become a mother. In her article, Lightfoot analyses one of the ways in which Aura is presented by Nonnos as a scaled-up version of the story of Nicaea (that other virgin huntress raped by Dionysos). In the binding motif employed by Nonnos to describe how Dionysos felt the need to restrain Aura further during their coupling, Lightfoot examines what the bondage means in a broader aspect of the gender reversal dynamics found in the erotic narratives of the poem.

Aura is a fascinating character within the *Dionysiaka* because of what gender means to her, as opposed to what her female body means to her. She recognises that she has a woman's body, but she takes pride in the fact that it is very masculine. As we shall see in my second case-study, Aura does not have any difficulty accepting her female body for what it is, even though this is due to the fact that she sees it as more masculine than feminine; but she does have difficulty accepting the gender role assigned to someone with a woman's body. Many scholars have examined the Aura episode of the *Dionysiaka* and the gender inversions found within it; R. Koehler focused on the parallelism between the stories of Nicaea and Aura, and how the different endings given by Nonnos have influenced our interpretation of these twin rapes within the poem⁴⁴. Many others too have read the Aura and Nicaea episodes as parallels aiding our understanding of Nonnos' attempt to refine a story trope; in fact, earlier scholarship is mostly centered on the treatment of the two stories

⁴³ Lightfoot 2000: 293.

⁴⁴ Cf. Koehler 1853: 92. Nicaea, unlike Aura, in the end accepts her fate and raises her child Telete, whereas Aura never accepts her role as mother going as far as to devour one of the twins born to her by Dionysos.

in this light⁴⁵. R. Schmiel too reads in the Aura episode Nonnos' attempt to emotionally affect the reader⁴⁶.

However, the use of gender for the over-dramatization of the Aura episode in contrast to the Nicaea episode, though instrumental for the understanding of the text, does not necessarily address the tension between gender inversions and transgressions found in the Aura episode specifically. Dionysos' gender-fluidity and Aura's gender-rigidity, which is laced in delusion, has a lasting effect in our interpretation of his overall victory. Featuring in this last episode before he ascends Olympus, Dionysos succeeds in his quest because he was able to father his third incarnation via a Titan⁴⁷. Nonnos focuses on Aura's inability to accept her assigned gender role as mother to Dionysos' twins. This speaks to a greater narrative in which Dionysos is perennially denied his godhood. Either from Titan born monsters (like Deriades), or Titan goddesses (like Aura), Dionysos is constantly defending himself against threats to his realisation as a fully-fledged god. His fluidity on the gender spectrum is key to understanding this constant threat to his divinity, because they are closely interconnected. Dionysos is the gender-fluid god; as such he is mocked and challenged by his Titan enemies. His two main victories over Deriades and Aura will be taken as two case-studies to further illustrate this point: that his fluid gender identity is what allows him to overcome hyper-masculinity as expressed in his two main Titan enemies.

⁴⁵ Cf. Collart 1930: 262; Keydell 1927: 399-400 and 1937: 909; d'Ippolito 1964: 103-08; Rühl 1909: 50-62; Chuvin 1991: 167-70. Chuvin specifically, focuses on the geographical elements of the two rape stories and what they mean for the interpretation of Nonnos' use of them.

⁴⁶ Schmiel 1993: 473.

⁴⁷ This is in reference to the mystery god Iakkhos, on whom I will return for my second case-study.

Case-Study 1. When the Thyrsus Pierced the Giants

As a case-study of the treatment of gender in the *Dionysiaka* as a whole, in this first section of my thesis, I explore the highly gendered language used to describe the battle between Deriades and Dionysos before the death of the former occurs. Deriades is one of the main adversaries of Dionysos; he stands in the way of the latter's ascension to Olympos⁴⁸. In this section I will focus on the importance of the role of gender in this important battle with the king of the Indians. Specifically, I will illustrate the connection between the gendered language of the battle with Nonnos' ironic undertones. Gender and irony are intrinsically linked in the description of the beginning of this battle scene and so, in this first case-study, I explore the significance of this interplay and its possible connection to the brevity of the description of Deriades' death. Irony is found with Deriades' swift demise, and it is also expressed through words which may bear alternate meanings, like with the use of the word θωρήσσω (as will be illustrated in the second part of this section) when Deriades describes the reasons why he fled the battle with Dionysos. These literary devices are used to affect the reader. Deception/disguise and true understanding are the other important aspects of this episode which will be examined in this section particularly because they are tied to gender perceptions. Indeed, gender characterises Dionysos' battle with Deriades in this book. This battle sets masculine and feminine characteristics in opposition while at the same time a figure of uncertain gender identity, and also in disguise, acts as a mediator of the battle: the goddess Athena.

⁴⁸ As I shall demonstrate in the second case-study of this thesis, Aura is the other important adversary of Dionysos. These two characters pose the biggest threat to Dionysos, Deriades in the battle narratives and Aura in the erotic narratives of the poem.

1.1 Battle Transformations – Gender and War

When the defeat of the Indian king occurs in the *Dionysiaka*, it marks the end of a long winding war. In book 40. 91-2, Nonnos describes how Dionysos hurled the thyrsus and simply grazed the side of Deriades. This grazing was enough to kill this great adversary⁴⁹: δαίμων δ' ἄμπελόεις ταμεσίχροα θύρσον ἰάλλων | ἀκρότατον χροά μούνον ἐπέγραφε Δηριαδῆος, 'the viny god hurling the skin-cutting thyrsus grazed only the surface of Deriades' skin'. Scholars have noted the similarities of the description of the death of Deriades with Homeric scenes of dying on the battlefield. In discussing the Indian king's defeat in detail, B. Simon concludes that the fatal grazing wound inflicted on Deriades recalls the fatal wound inflicted on Hector's neck at *Iliad* 22. 325-30. However, even though Nonnos seems to be taking Homeric battle scenes as inspiration for his own, in the case of Deriades he gives it a "registre dionysiaque"⁵⁰. R. Keydell finds the description of Deriades' death "Klägliche, fast komisch"⁵¹; P. Collart too detects a tragic and simultaneously comedic element with the way Nonnos deals with the death of one of the more important characters in his epic⁵².

The concise and brief nature of the description of this important moment, as others have pointed out, is paralleled by the brief description in book 48. 974-78 of the ascension of Dionysos to Olympos. Simon remarks that the brief description of these two important moments in the text contrasts Nonnos' usual volubility⁵³. Collart too refers to the brevity of the description of Deriades' demise and finds that it was foretold at 17. 294-6 when Dionysos killed Orontes⁵⁴. Dionysos killed both of them very quickly. Keydell finds that to locate the death of Deriades in the text one must

⁴⁹ Any translations provided in this section are mine, unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁰ Simon 1999: 121.

⁵¹ Keydell 1927: 425.

⁵² Collart 1930: 229.

⁵³ Simon 1999: 122. Cf. Hopkinson 1994: 27.

⁵⁴ Collart 1930: 229.

read between the lines⁵⁵. N. Hopkinson detects an underlying tone of irony in Nonnos' swift treatment of Deriades' demise⁵⁶; the author, he says, seems to be underlining "mortal feebleness in the face of divine might". The un-warlike way in which Dionysos throws his thyrsus at Deriades and the fact that it is enough for it to simply graze him in order to kill him points to the triumph of Dionysos' gender-fluid power over Deriades' gender rigidity. There is tension between sight and the perception of gender right before Deriades' death, and the intended effect of this tension is to showcase Dionysos' superiority.

Indeed, it seems that from the very beginning of the book, gender lines become blurred: Athena, who is on Dionysos' side, has turned herself into Morrheus, the son-in-law of Deriades, and berates him for his cowardice. Previously, Deriades had fled the front of the battle; after seeing Dionysos' forces overcome his own, he ran away in book 39. 407: φεύγων ὑγρὸν Ἄρῃα θαλασσομόθου Διονύσου, 'fleeing the watery attack of sea-fighting Dionysos'. In that moment, Deriades realises that he may very well not survive war with Dionysos and that thought alone is enough to send him running away from the battle⁵⁷. This action is in accordance with the Homeric prototype of a warrior fleeing his opponent; it is noteworthy too that the one who flees (both Hector and Deriades) is also the one to lose the battle and die at the hands of his opponent. Nonnos foreshadows the use of the thyrsus by Dionysos at 36. 165, but he uses it only now against Deriades⁵⁸. Deriades was the massively built king of a ferocious nation, the horned son of the river god Hydaspes, and the nymph Asterie⁵⁹, daughter of Helios; he should have been almost

⁵⁵ Keydell 1927: 426.

⁵⁶ Hopkinson 1994: 27.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Il.* 22. 294 for the false appearance of Athena in the guise of Deiphobos in front of Hector during his final battle with Achilles. As is well known, Hector loses that battle, just as Deriades loses this one. In both cases, Athena appears to the heroes in disguise. Cf. also *Il.* 22. 136-9, where Hector runs away from Achilles. For the parallels between these two episodes, see Simon 1999: 120-22.

⁵⁸ See Simon 1999: 122.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Dionysiaka*.17. 280-82 for Deriades' genealogy. Also, cf. *Dion.*13. 1-5 for the description of Deriades as the horned son of Hydaspes. In those lines we learn that Dionysos was sent to subdue the Indians due to their unlawful

invincible. And yet, in front of Dionysos' forces and in front of Dionysos himself, he cowers and flees.

If we look closely at what Morrheus-Athena tells him in order to inspire him to fight Dionysos⁶⁰, we see that her reasoning is based on gender qualities which Deriades is not displaying as he should. At lines 12-14 we read: [. . .] Ἦ πόθεν ἄντην | ὄψεται Ὀρσιβόην μενεδήιον, αἶ κεν ἀκούσῃ | Δηριάδην φεύγοντα καὶ οὐ μίμνοντα γυναῖκας, 'or how will you face steadfast Orsiboe, if indeed she hears of the fleeing Deriades and of him who does not stand fast against women'. Athena here cunningly sets her trap; in the guise of his son-in-law, she reminds Deriades that Orsiboe, his own wife has not fled from the fight with Dionysos and his forces. That she continues to fight, never faltering, while he flees is something unprecedented. Athena's irony here serves a specific purpose: her strategy is to inspire bloodlust in Deriades, the kind found in war and battlefields. And she does so by drawing an explicit contrast between the expected gendered actions of man and woman. However feminine Dionysos seems, he is not the one fleeing battle; while on the other hand, however masculine Deriades seems, he is the one to cower and flee.

It is significant that as a goddess, Athena blurs the line between gender identity; her divine identity bridges the sexes because she is the masculine virgin daughter of Zeus who presides over military strategy as well as household chores. Here she bridges the sexes once more in her disguise as Morrheus, and, to reinforce the idea that Deriades appears weak and cowardly, she then

ways: Ζεὺς δὲ πατὴρ προέηκεν ἐς αὔλια θέσκελα Ῥεῖης | Ἴριν ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ἐργεσιμόθῳ Διονύσῳ, | ὄφρα δίκης ἀδίδακτον ὑπερφίαλον γένος Ἰνδῶν | Ἀσιδος ἐξελάσειεν ἐῷ ποινήτορι θύρσῳ, | ναύμαχον ἀμήσας ποταμήιον ὕα κεράστην, | Δηριάδην βασιλῆα, 'Father Zeus sent forth Iris to the divine halls of Rhea bearing the message to Dionysos who stirs the fray, that he is to drive out from Asia the proud race of the Indians, untaught in matters of justice, with his punishing thyrsus, dragging away from the sea the horned son of the river, the king Deriades'. Cf. Hadjittofi 2016: 135, who mentions that Orontes, Morrheus, and Deriades himself are all "irascible, hyper-virile men, who fail to recognise Dionysus' godhead".

⁶⁰ Her attempt to inspire him leads to his gruesome end. The conniving element of Athena's speech is reflected in the word *παρέπεισε* (40. 31), which has undertones of beguilement. Other examples of the use of this verb in this sense include: *Il.* 24.208; *Od.* 24.119, 14. 290, 22. 213; Plato *Laws* 892d; Arist. *LI*.969b17 (see *LSJ* ad loc.). I will return to the motif of Athena's deceit of Deriades in the second half of this section.

continues to say that she/he is disgusted to be married into Deriades' family: lines 22-24, [. . .] αἰδόμενος γὰρ | καλλείψω τεὸν ἄστυ, καὶ ἵξομαι εἰς χθόνα Μήδων, | ἵξομαι εἰς Σκυθίην, ἵνα μὴ σέο γαμβρὸς ἀκούσω, 'for I am ashamed, I will abandon your city, and I will go to the land of the Medes, I will go to Scythia, so that I may not answer to being your son-in-law'. By threatening to abandon his/her station as the son-in-law of Deriades on account of the latter's cowardice, Morrheus-Athena intends to spark a sense of shame within Deriades, who will be ridiculed if one of his sons-in-law abandons his household. Morrheus-Athena insinuates that Deriades' shame will extend to his daughter Cheirobie, who, as the offspring of a cowardly king, will be considered unfit to be married to a warrior. No matter the fact that she herself is also fighting in this war, as we learn from line 18, a little earlier: μάρναντο Βασσαρίδεςσι, συνεσπομένη παρακοίτη, 'she fought against the Bassarids, standing next to her husband'.

In fact, the irony in this passage is so persistent that Morrheus-Athena continues on to say that he/she would rather go to Scythia so as to be away from the shame of being tied to Deriades in any way. He/She would rather find a wife there among the Amazons who do not have a cowardly father and thus are better than Cheirobie on account of lineage: lines 25-30,

Ἄλλ' ἐρρέεις· “εὐοπλος ἐμὴ δάμαρ οἶδεν Ἐνυώ”. | Εἰσὶν Ἀμαζονίδες περὶ Καύκασον,
ὀππόθι πολλαὶ | Χειροβίης πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀριστεύουσι γυναῖκες· | κεῖθι δορικτήτην βριαρὴν
ἀνάεδνος ἀκοίτης | εἰς γάμον, ἣν ἐθέλω, μίαν ἄξομαι· ἐν θαλάμοις γὰρ | οὐ δέχομαι σέο
παῖδα φυγοπολέμοιο τοκῆος,

'But you might say: “my wife good with weapons knows of the war-cry”. There are Amazons around Kaukasos, where many women are far better than Cheirobie; there, as a husband, if I want, I will marry a strong one, captive of my spear, without bride-price; for I do not accept in my bedchamber a child of your cowardly seed'.

The evocation of the Amazons here again highlights the upending of traditional gender roles, as they are the prototypical female warriors not unlike Athena. Nonnos' preoccupation with inverting gender norms, reflected both in Athena's transformation and in the images he invokes, serve to enhance Deriades' false masculinity. What is more, Nonnos plays up the fact that lineage is an important factor in determining worth in order to enhance Morrheus-Athena's ironic undertones. No matter that Cheirobie is fighting in her father's war, no matter that she is fighting next to her husband for her homeland, she would still be considered spoiled goods if her father flees from battle, and from his responsibility to his crown and people. In ancient literature it is often that children pay for their father's sins; mythology is rife with examples of one parent's misconduct tainting his offspring and the future of his line⁶¹. Deriades here in the eyes of Morrheus-Athena appears in the worst possible light; he flees from battle with the effeminate Dionysos and his maenads, even though the women of his family hold their positions. This results in tainting those females who are connected to him; his wife and daughter, though brave, are discarded, their worth tainted by association. It is more important for the males in the family to show valor than the females, because without it, they lose their worth, and consequently their place in the male-governed society. Deriades' cowardice is a capital offense considering he is the king of his societal structure. By affiliation, the women most closely connected to him lose their worth too.

At this point, in the ironic verbal blow which Morrheus-Athena sends Deriades' way, even the Amazons, an exception as far as societal norms and variations are concerned, appear as a far better alternative to Deriades' household. Morrheus-Athena even goes so far as to remind Deriades of the business transaction that occurred when the former married Cheirobie. Indeed, Nonnos here

⁶¹ The most famous example, perhaps, is the story surrounding the house of Atreus (see e.g. Aeschylus' *Orestia*, Pindar *Olympian Ode* 24ff.). Another example is the tale about Oedipus (see e.g. Sophocles, *Antigone*, *Oedipus at Colonus*).

refers to the old marriage practice where the prospective husband would offer ἔδνα, ‘brideprice’, in order to obtain a wife. This practice of ἔδνα dictated that the groom-to-be would shower his future in-laws with various gifts of high value so that they might give him their daughter⁶². This brideprice-for-bride transaction was conducted under the understanding that the groom-to-be expects to obtain a wife who can give him strong offspring who will in turn take over his way of life. Morrheus-Athena is here insulting Deriades indirectly yet so profoundly that it would indeed spur anyone into action. The idea that physically overcoming an Amazon from Kaukasos is a far better alternative to having wasted his money on a daughter of Deriades including the claim that a lawless Amazon is a far better alternative to Cheirobie and her elite lineage, drives Morrheus-Athena’s point home: Deriades is cowardly and deceitful, with a faulty seed, and so not a real man.

This insult in itself is interesting because of what follows. Deriades is ready with excuses to justify his behaviour to what he perceives to be his son-in-law. He takes the bait and plays into Morrheus-Athena’s plan. At line 38 he says: Οὐ πρόμος, οὐ πρόμος οὔτος, ἐὼν δέμας αἰὲν ἀμείβων, ‘No soldier, no soldier is he, who always changes his skin/bodily form’. Aside from proving that Deriades has fallen into Athena’s trap, this statement also tells us that the core of Deriades’ fear is Dionysos’ changeability. His fluidity as it appears in his ability to change his bodily form, causes Deriades’ flight. The way Nonnos has laid out this scene gives us another glimpse into how he has woven irony into interplays of gender. Athena too, the goddess who combines both masculine and feminine traits, changes her form. But Deriades will not see this yet; for now, he is focused on the changeability of Dionysos without realising another threat which is closer to him: Athena’s changeability.

⁶² Cf. Lacey 1966: 55-68.

Both Athena and Dionysos exist within the spectrum of gender and possess both masculine and feminine characteristics. Though they were born with their physical bodies determined, the way they identify themselves within their social structure is not as clear-cut. But then, their fluid gender persona enables them to make physical changes to their bodies. In the case of Athena in this book, we see her transform into a man; for Dionysos, this ability extends far beyond changing between male and female. By defying physical definition during his earlier fight scene with Deriades (for lines 41-56 see below), Dionysos instills fear in his opponent. Deriades does not know who or what he is fighting. All his attacks have thus been futile⁶³. In his response to his son-in-law (the disguised Athena) he launches into a description of what he saw when he tried to attack Dionysos. At lines 42-56 he lists all the things his opponent turned into during their fight: first Dionysos turned into a leopard, then a lion, a serpent, a bear, a flame, a boar, a bull, a tree or plant (φυτὸν at line 55), and finally a stream of water flying in the air (line 56: νύσσαν ἐξ ἡερίην ὀρώω κυρτούμενον ὕδωρ, ‘water bending in the airy turning post’)⁶⁴. Deriades’ description of the various forms of Dionysos is testament to a fighting style which mirrors his very essence: chaos. And even though Deriades himself is formidable, being born of divine parents, even though he is the king of a fierce and bloodthirsty nation, he is no match for the chaos Dionysos brings. It is also worth noting here, that even though Athena’s fluidity and power are not tied to chaos, she nevertheless inflicts chaos by disguising herself and leading Deriades astray.

⁶³ Dionysos’ fluid nature was foreshadowed when his opponents underestimated his power due to his soft looks, and womanly stature. See for example, Orontes’ description of Dionysos at 17.171-89, and Pentheus’ disdain later at 44.134.

⁶⁴ Shape-shifting and gender fluidity have been interconnected elsewhere too in Greek literature: see, e.g., the myth of Teiresias Hesiod, *fr.* 275 (M-W); Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.316-38. Also, c.f. Slatkin 2011: 153 for the idea that μῆτις is attributed to shapeshifters just like Proteus, Nereus, and Thetis. There is a connection between shapeshifting and figures of interchangeable gender identities. Indeed, it is telling that the daughter of the personified Μῆτις is Athena, a masculine, virginal goddess who plays an integral role in Dionysos’ fight against Deriades.

For all his power and might, for all his ferociousness and bloodlust, Deriades cowers before the chaotic forces of Dionysos and Athena. It is telling that Nonnos uses his epithet ‘Lyaaios’, at line 42: ἀντὶ Λυαίου, ‘instead of Lyaaios’, right before Deriades launches into a description of the various forms Dionysos took. He refers to that ability of Dionysos to loosen, unbind, and take apart. Aside from his other qualities, this might just be his most terrifying one: the power to physically become all those wild things civilization opposes. Leopards and lions, boars and bulls and great big serpents, all animals of primal strength, wild defiance, and overwhelming, destructive sexuality (for the bull), echo all those things human memory held as threatening civilised order⁶⁵. And this is enhanced with the additional mention of water⁶⁶; this feature is telling of Dionysos more generally. He is the god of wet nature, of all that exists within the life-giving wetness of the showering seed⁶⁷. However, in this instance the κυρτούμενον ὕδωρ of line 56 which is what Deriades sees instead of Dionysos himself, is the wave of a sea⁶⁸. Just as the sea curves up menacingly into enormous waves, so here Dionysos is utilising his fluid physicality to attack Deriades. The reader gets a taste of Deriades’ fear when the massive curving wave expands upward and rushes forth. It is noteworthy that this is the last transformation Deriades refers to when describing Dionysos’ warfare. After this he says at 57-8 Ἐνθεν ἐγὼ τρομέων πολυφάρμακα θαύματα τέχνης | φύλοπιν ἄλλοπρόσσαλλον ἄλυσκαζω Διονύσου· ‘therefore I, terrified of the bewitched marvels of his craft, shy away from the deceitful battle-cry of Dionysos’. As a son of a river-god, Deriades should have some familiarity with certain manifestations of water; yet the

⁶⁵ For the wildness of nature and what it meant for the lives of the early humans cf. Detienne and Svenbro 1989: 148-63 in Detienne, Vernant *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*. Also, for the connection between Dionysos and wild nature cf. Seaford 2006: 23-5.

⁶⁶ Cf. too the fire of 39. 405, earlier in the text.

⁶⁷ Dodds 1960: xi-xii. As he mentions, Dionysos is the driving force that exists within nature and which compels it to procreate. He embodies it and governs it. Like another Phanes, that primordial hermaphrodite who in Orphic cosmogony compels nature to procreate, Dionysos is that compulsion which leads to creation.

⁶⁸ Simon 1999: 260.

waves of the sea he encounters here coupled with the fact that they come from a god with an undefined and fluid nature, serve to throw him off balance.

With his transformations, Dionysos reminds Deriades, a king in the human world of cities and countries, that just outside his city's walls exists a plain far wider and much more ferocious than the world within which Deriades rules. Even though this king himself is a descendant of two natural forces as well, being the son of a river-god and a star nymph, he is still less than Dionysos. Besides being the son of Zeus, and even though such a lineage far outshines that of Hydaspes, it is in his constitution as the god of wine, the specific qualities of what he presides over and animates, that mark Dionysos mightier.

1.2 The Irony in Words: Battle Verbs and Bacchic Elements

As was noted earlier in this section, scholars such as Simon, Keydell, and Collart have noted the irony which often underlines the *Dionysiaka*⁶⁹. This is often reserved for climactic scenes and as a result renders them pointedly anticlimactic. In the case of Deriades, Nonnos has presented a formidable opponent to Dionysos, but one who is destined to fail. His demise is foreshadowed when Athena herself (not in her disguise as Morrheus) is finally perceived by Deriades when she stands next to Dionysos. As he says at lines 57-60: ἔνθεν ἐγὼ τρομέων πολυφάρμακα θαύματα τέχνης⁷⁰ | φύλοπιν ἄλλοπρόσαλλον ἄλυσκάζω Διονύσου· | ἀλλὰ πάλιν Βρομίῳ θωρήξομαι, ἄχρισ ἐλέγξω | μάγγανα τεχνήεντα δολορραφέος Διονύσου, 'therefore I, terrified of the bewitched marvels of his craft, shy away from the deceitful battle-cry of Dionysos; but again I will arm myself against Bromios, until I put to shame the crafted deceits of conniving Dionysos'. Deriades

⁶⁹ Cf. notes 48-52 earlier.

⁷⁰ Cf. here Euripides *Bakkhai*. 806: σῶσαί σ' εἰ θέλω τέχναις ἐμαῖς, 'if I want, I can save you with my crafts'. There, Dionysos uses the same word Pentheus had used to accuse him of trickery.

concludes the explanation of his retreat by saying outright that he is afraid of the ‘bewitched marvels of his (i.e. Dionysos’) craft’; this is why he fled. It is not because he is a coward, but because he cannot face the spells of his opponent, as he says. The word πολυφάρμακα is a hapax and seems to take on the negative connotations of φάρμακα⁷¹. The prefix πολύ- here may be a further verbal representation of the way Deriades perceives Dionysos’ fluidity even while ‘casting spells’. As we saw earlier, it is not that Dionysos casts spells; it is his fluid nature which allows him to change his form. The hapax with the prefix πολύ- then may very well be Nonnos’ linguistic representation of Dionysos’ warfare as perceived by his enemy.

But Deriades’ perception is superficial. He fails to recognise is Dionysos’ identification within the power he wields. That which Deriades perceives as spells in Dionysos’ shapeshifting warfare are not exactly that⁷². Dionysos’ divine peculiarity, or better yet, the peculiarity which characterises his divine aspect, is the fact that he not only uses the wild and chaotic forces of nature, he *is* that wild and chaotic force. When he turns into lions, bulls, serpents, and fire he is not using tricks or magic; he is using his divine power. It is not that he uses sorcery to enforce his will upon his surrounding natural environment; he is found within that natural environment. This means that his will to use the wild power found in nature is the will to use his *own* power. Deriades’ failure to understand his opponent will lead to his demise.

Deriades’ false perception is reflected perhaps more clearly with the verbs of lines 59-60 above. Continuing his mocking of Deriades, Nonnos chooses to describe the king’s return to battle with the verbs θωρήσσω and ἐλέγξω. The verb θωρήσσω, apart from meaning ‘arm against’, may also mean ‘to intoxicate, to make drunk’⁷³. This is an interesting choice on behalf of Nonnos

⁷¹ Cf. Simon 1999: 260 ad loc.

⁷² For the trickery of Dionysos, see Hadjittofi 2016: 138.

⁷³ Cf., e.g. *Theognis*.842 for an instance where we might find this interpretation.

because the description of Deriades' arming evokes a sphere of activity under Dionysos' control and protection: the symposium and inebriation. Nonnos is once again verbally reflecting Deriades' doomed fate to lose to Dionysos in a subtly ironic way. The verb's symposiastic connotations and the fact that he says that he will 'shame' (ἐλέγξω) the 'crafted deceits of conniving Dionysos' denote a reverse-power dynamic between the two opponents. The verb θωρήσσω, echoes the practice of the symposium which was sacred to Dionysos while on the surface it seems to simply evoke battle preparation scenes. But the second verb of action Nonnos chooses to use here is more proper for verbal competition. It has the sense of testing something before revealing its limits and thus shaming it. Deriades still believes that Dionysos is casting fake spells (40. 57-60).

Yet, from what follows, Deriades will not be the one to shame Dionysos. By testing Dionysos' spells, Deriades believes, or is inspired to believe due to the coaxing of Morrheus-Athena, that he will prevail upon contrived falsehoods. Since the falsehoods are anything but, his attempt to check Dionysos and shame him will meet with failure. Deriades believes himself to be a true and real warrior king, who uses a spear and relies on his armour to fight his opponents.⁷⁴ The physical and visible elements of Deriades (towering strong figure, rough exterior) are emphasized in contrast to Dionysos who is not what he appears to be. Deriades knows where his powers lie because he can see them forever there, unchanging. Dionysos, on the other hand,

⁷⁴ Both of these components which accommodate him into battle are visible. The effeminate Dionysos on the other hand is secretive and no one knows where his power comes from. There may be a connection here between hyper-masculinity shaming femininity. The psychological effect of visible manhood (the external genital organs) and hidden womanhood (the internal genital organs) has been integral to dividing the sexes and assigning gender roles within society (see Keuls 1985: 65-97). A naked man has nothing to hide; he is visible in his entirety. All that makes him who he is, all that defines him, is readily seen if he chooses to be seen. There is no shame in male nudity because male nudity is physically conditioned to reveal itself. Female nudity, on the other hand, is secretive; a woman's nakedness reveals little about the inner workings of her most (externally determined) prized aspect; that is, to give birth. The bodily elements of her womanhood are hidden deep with her physicality; her nudity is not what it seems. That which defines her as female is not easily seen. And so, it follows that by the physical nature of their bodies, men and women occupy the opposing poles of human existence: the former radiant, real, and true in what defines him; the latter dark, secretive, and false in what defines her. For Deriades who finds his identity in his clearly defined manhood, Dionysos' changeability and feminine appearance is unsettling. By looking like a female and by possessing unseen attributes (his ability to shapeshift being the unseen and undetectable characteristic), Dionysos throws Deriades off balance.

displays all those characteristics that define female otherness; he does not fight like a man with armour and weapons. Instead he changes his form and *becomes* something else in a constant war dance of absurdity⁷⁵.

But what Deriades fails to understand is that it is not through false manipulation, sorcery, or deceit that Dionysos fights with his varying warfare. As was discussed above, it is rather an echo of his omnipotence over nature and the universe. This power of his, as is narrated earlier in the *Dionysiaka* and is stated outright by Dionysos himself, comes from the fact that he is the son of Zeus and Persephone⁷⁶; he is the god Zagreus, destined to take over Zeus' cosmic throne and as such destined to encompass a divine power which permeates all of creation. Dionysos is not conjuring up that which is not there; he is not deceiving with empty appearances and fake skins. His power will prove much more terrifying than that. Lines 82-83 point to Dionysos' superiority, even omnipotence: Καὶ τότε βοτρύεις κοτέων βακχεύετο δαίμων | ὕψιπενής περίμετρος, ἴσος Παρνησίδι πέτρῃ, 'And then, the viny daimon was maddened being as tall and large as the rocks of Parnassos'. These two lines describe Dionysos' counter-attack; it is during this attack that he defeats Deriades once and for all. Nonnos' description here focuses on Dionysos' identity as a daimon, and as a being of massive size⁷⁷.

Yet Deriades is unable to see this, unable to see the truth of Dionysos' superiority, because Athena does not appear to him in truth; the thoughts he had when attempting to explain himself for his cowardice are deceptive. In fact, his cowardice is the only real thing about him in this moment of delusion. A little earlier, at lines 61-81, when he turns to fight Dionysos for the final

⁷⁵ On Dionysos' unusual weapons and his portrayal of dancing when fighting, cf. Hadjittofi 2016: 137n47.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Dion.* 44. 212-13, where Dionysos proclaims that he 'revived the name of primeval Zagreus', ὄφρα γεραίρης | ἀρχέγονου Ζαγρῆος ἐπωνυμίην Διονύσου. Also, cf. 44. 255-7 where Persephone is said to prepare her Furies to help Zagreus Dionysos, his late-born brother Dionysos.

⁷⁷ Cf. Simon 1999: 121-22 for the correlation between Deriades' size which recalls Dionysos' massive stature. This detail enhances the image of the masculine Dionysos while also incorporating his divine nature.

time and sees Athena, not Morrheus-Athena, standing next to Dionysos, he realises that he has been tricked by the goddess. It was not the goddess of wisdom who inspired his earlier thoughts, but the goddess in the guise of someone else, an imposter goddess who cheated him as discussed above. Indeed, at line 79 we read: καὶ δόλον ἠπεροπῆα σοφῆς ἐνόησεν Ἀθήνης, ‘and he understood the deceitful bait of wise Athena’⁷⁸.

What this means for the plot at this point becomes clearer with Dionysos’ reaction to Athena’s presence. Indeed, we are told that Dionysos is glad to see Athena standing next to him; at lines 80-1 we read: Τὴν μὲν ἰδὼν Διόνυσος ἐγήθεεν, ἐν κραδίῃ δέ | ψευδομένη γίνωσκε συναιχμάζουσιν Ἀθήνην, ‘and having seen her, Dionysos was gladdened, and he knew in his heart that being in disguise Athena was helping him’. The participle ψευδομένη highlights Athena’s deceptive nature which is in accordance with Dionysos’ gender-fluid rule. She is well known for her disguises and this is indicative of her gender-fluidity. Or, rather, her gender-fluidity is what causes her many disguises. Thus, Athena and Dionysos both can exist in a gender-fluid world; Deriades, however, cannot.

This is an important element of his final battle with Deriades because of what Athena represents as a goddess. She is the deity of wisdom, strategy in battle, and forethought. Her mother was the first consort of Zeus, Metis, who was swallowed by him so that he could infuse himself with Metis’ power⁷⁹. As mentioned earlier, μήτις and the goddess to embody it is connected to shapeshifting and gender fluidity. The world thus always had gender fluid beings who were powerful because of their changeability. Indeed, Athena is also a goddess who bridges the gendered elements of the sexes; she presides over both war and household chores. She is both

⁷⁸ The adjective ἠπεροπῆα is used of Dionysos AP 9. 524. 8. Athena’s trickery might be said to be coloured by dionysiac deceit.

⁷⁹ Cf. Hes.*Theogony*.886 ff.

warrior and weaver⁸⁰. In essence, she fluctuates between the spheres of masculinity and femininity. Taking a step back and considering what Athena's help means on a symbolic level, I would like to point out that the significance of her help gives credence to Dionysos' power, fluidity, and, subsequently, to Dionysos' victory. Deriades has driven himself into a corner with his cowardice; in order not to lose face, as Morrheus-Athena reminds him, he must return to battle. Seeing Athena appear next to his opponent now, one he has accused of falsity and sorcery, should have made him realise Dionysos' superiority. Athena's appearance startles Deriades and at the same time helps Dionysos realise that his victory is imminent.

When Dionysos sets out against Deriades one last time, Deriades turns to his father, the river-god Hydaspes for support⁸¹. I would now like to turn to the final lines of this battle narrative and the manner with which Dionysos launches his final attack in more detail, in order to illustrate how the first part of Dionysos' ascension is completed in terms of gendered language and ironic undertones. This linguistic style which has been the main theme of this section culminates here with the death of Deriades. Indeed, Dionysos hurls a masculine phallic symbol against the hyper-virile Deriades. There seems to be a contradiction between what his enemies think of him (i.e. as effeminate) and what he actually does to beat them (i.e. using a masculine-looking thyrsus)⁸².

The meaning of the word δαίμων at lines 82-3 is multifaceted which is why I wish to examine it here; without diverging too much from the main focus of this case-study, I will only

⁸⁰ The word Deriades uses to describe Dionysos at line 60: δολοπραφείας, 'he who weaves guiles', further suggests a link between the Athena of weaving and her protégé Dionysos.

⁸¹ Cf. Simon 1999: 121n2. As she says, Deriades does not know that Hydaspes has already succumbed to Dionysos at 24. 10-16; cf. 24. 57.

⁸² For more information on the effeminacy of Dionysos see e.g. Otto 1965: 171-80. For the idea that θῆλυς modifying Dionysos' thyrsus at 47. 522-3 see Fayant 2000: 183. As I will attempt to show, the thyrsus is a phallic symbol despite it being made by wood which is typically weaker than the iron of swords or spears. It is telling too that the case which Fayant discusses is uttered by a Pelasgian man who compares Dionysos to Perseus and finds the former lacking in light of Perseus strength and glory. The thyrsus is feminised not by the narrator himself but by an opponent of Dionysos, a *theomachos*.

mention the general connotations of this noun. The word is generally attested to mean ‘divine power’. As opposed to θεός, which refers to the god in person, δαίμων means the power of a god in his or her most abstract form⁸³. It can also refer to that power (spiritual or semi-divine) which controls the destiny of individuals, like when it is used to describe one’s lot in life. In this sense, the root of the word, from the verb δαίωμα, ‘to distribute power’, be it by god or destiny, is tied to a general sense of δαίμονες as protectors of humans, who are intrinsically tied to human life, whether they distribute one’s lot (good or bad), whether they are identified as that lot (again good or bad), or whether they are the abstract power of the gods regulating human existence⁸⁴.

Modified also by the words ὑπὲρβην⁸⁵ and περίμετρος⁸⁶, δαίμων here is described as having the stature and the appearance of superhuman entities. As we saw, it is stated that the daimon Dionysos ‘stretched up high, excessive in size like the rocks of Mt Parnassos⁸⁷’. And so, even though on the outside Dionysos appears feminine, soft, and weak, he was also massive in

⁸³ Cf. the discussion about the nature of the gods in antiquity in Bremmer and Erskine 2010. When attempting to understand the nature of the ancient Greek gods, there are two main considerations: whether they were thought of as abstract beings representing natural phenomena, or whether they were thought of as actual corporeal entities with personal traits and specific characters. See also Dodds 1951: 153 who mentions that a daimon is “man’s potential divinity and actual guilt. It is nearer in some ways to the indwelling spirit which the shaman inherits from other shamans than it is to the rational “soul” in which Socrates believed; but it has been moralised as guilt-carrier, and the world of the senses has become the Hades in which it suffers torment”. The themes Dodds has touched upon regarding the nature of the daimon may be integral to the understanding of Dionysos success here; it may be that as half-human his daimon is the carrier of his suffering until the realisation of his divine potential, i.e. ascending Olympos. For the idea that the Olympian gods are dubbed as daimones by mortals who do not know which of the gods is hindering or assisting them see Ibid. 12. Cf. *Il.* 15.461f where Teucer is described as blaming the snapping of his bowstring on some daimon thwarting him; it was in fact Zeus who snapped the bowstring. Cf. also *Od.* 1.384f where Antinoos says that the gods have put ideas into Telemachos’ head, and it is in fact Athena who is advising him. For the evolution of the word to its negative meaning see S. I. Johnston 2010: 418. Finally, see Bremmer 1994: 11 for the idea that whenever the gods intervened with the lives of mortals in very specific ways and for a brief time they were called daimones.

⁸⁴ Cf. Chantraine 1968: 246 ad loc. Chantraine notes the popular ancient Greek definition of δαίμων from the word δαήμων which highlights the ‘distribution’ element found in the word’s meaning.

⁸⁵ See *LSJ* ad loc.: ‘stretched on high’. This word is used to describe the neck of Kadmos’ dragon earlier in the *Dionysiaka*, in book 4. 376, as well as the legs of an ostrich in Oppian *Kynegetika*. 3.492.

⁸⁶ See *LSJ* ad loc.: ‘excessive, in size or beauty’, used in Homer to describe Penelope’s web, and in Oppian *Halieutika*. 3.190 to describe the skin of sea-monsters.

⁸⁷ This mountain is an interesting choice here, since it was closely associated with Dionysos and his cult practice. Bacchic ritual took place on the slopes of this mountain in the Phocis region near Delphi. Cf. McInerney 1999: 263-83.

size (a divine and masculine trait). At the moment of his victory his daimon reflects his outer appearance. For the careful opponent, perhaps one favored by Athena and her insight, Dionysos' divinity was evident all along; his massive stature though soft-looking was visible to Deriades, but he chose to not see it; instead he focused on Dionysos' femininity.

There is one last point to consider regarding the way Nonnos describes Dionysos' victory over the Indian king. That is, the use of the word αὐτόματος in the description of how he bridges the river. There may be an additional element of irony reflected in the use of this common adjective, the identification of which, I think, may serve to enhance our understanding of Nonnos' mockery of the hyper-virile king. After being struck by Dionysos' thyrsus, at 95-6 we learn: μηκεδανοῖς μελέεσι γεφυρώσας ὅλον ὕδωρ | αὐτόματος, 'with his long limbs bridging all the water himself'. The adjective generally means 'of a person acting of their own will'; or 'of inanimate things acting spontaneously'; or 'of plants growing of themselves'; 'of events happening on their own accord'; and also 'of something happening accidentally'. Aside from emphasizing Deriades' size, here, the description of Deriades falling into the surges of his father and bridging the two banks of the river αὐτόματος, by 'himself', 'of his own accord', or maybe even 'in accordance with the nature of things', is perhaps a poignant comment on behalf of Nonnos. Though not rare, the word αὐτόματος also appears in Euripides' *Bakkhai*. 446 to describe the way Dionysos' bonds came unbound. Deriades falls into the rushes of his father's surge after being 'hit by the man-destroying ivy bunch' (93: κισσήεντι τυπεῖς φθισήνορι θαλλῶ). The use of the word αὐτόματος to describe Deriades as he lies in the river is a scathing remark that this is the most he was able to accomplish with his massive size.

Additionally, with the word αὐτόματος, it may be that Nonnos is alluding to this power that Dionysos has to undo things (seen too in his epithet Lyaaios). Lastly, the word may also be a

remark on the inevitability of the spread of Dionysiac worship; that even though Dionysos has a lot of θεόμαχοι opposing his divinity, and challenging his godhood, it is inevitable that he emerges victorious from the battles with them and spreads his cult worship. And even though the narrator himself does not present any negative feminine characteristics onto Dionysos, there is no doubt that as a divinity he can blur lines and undo that which is tied together. Being closely connected to the female procreative force as a male fertility god reinforces his divine identity as the one to blur the lines and allows him to come into his own as a fully divine being, as opposed to a semi-divine one. Nonnos thus may be alluding to the *Bakkhai* line in order to remind his reader of Dionysos' power. His main Indian foe could only really ever bridge his father's banks αὐτόματος because he was too stuck in his ways as hyper-masculine. Deriades loses because he cannot appreciate, let alone become feminine. Dionysos employs polarities of gender to assert and reveal his divinity.

1.3 Conclusion

Dionysos and that which he represents is reflected in those who follow him. The maenads and the satyrs comprise a big part of his retinue and here, at the end of the Indian War, they come to taunt Deriades. Nonnos retains the ‘insult of the corpse’ type scene from Homeric epic when he describes how after Deriades’ death, Dionysos’ army rushed towards his corpse and proceeded to pierce his body with their swords and spears⁸⁸: 99-100 [. . .] ἀλλίζοντο δὲ πολλοί | ἔγχεσιν οὐτάζοντες ὅλον χροά Δηριαδῆος, ‘and many with swords/spears pierce the skin of Deriades all-over’. It is interesting to note here the phallic symbolism in the act of piercing something with an ἔγχος, the sharp edge of a weapon, either of a sword or a spear⁸⁹. Here he lies, the great masculine king of the Indians fallen in his father’s waters, slain by the thyrsus in an almost comedic, un-martial way, and even in death taunted by the masculine symbols of the Bacchants. His demise, and the treatment of his body after he has died, is tied to an ongoing theme which governs the power dynamic between Dionysos and the Indian king: that of cowering masculinity in the face of a ferocious perceived femininity.

In this section I hope to have shown that gendered language conveys ironic undertones which enhance the tension between two beings of different gender identities. This literary device is used to affect the reader of the text who now can better see the inferiority of Deriades in light of Dionysos’ power. The hyper-masculine Deriades loses against the effeminate Dionysos because of his narrowed view of the world. Nonnos reveals this attitude of Deriades explicitly in two

⁸⁸ Simon 1999: 263 refers to the fact that the great size of the defeated Deriades recalls the size of Dionysos, his enemy. She traces this linguistic trope to the Homeric epics. Specifically, she talks about how the Achaeans admire Hector’s size after he has died at *Iliad* 22. 370.

⁸⁹ See Burkert 1983: 59 on the symbolic relationship between the sword and the penis, as well as between piercing/stabbing and sexual penetration. See also Moorton 1990 :161-2 on the symbolic parallelism in the *Aeneid* of Dido’s death by the sword and Dido’s sexual penetration by Aeneias. Cf. Vance 1973: 138; Gillis 1983: 49-51; Keuls 1985:16-32, 66.

instances: when he has Deriades explain his cowardice (40. 57-60); and also, in the way he employs Athena and her disguise as Morrheus (40. 34-5, Καὶ θρασὺς ἀγνώστων δολίην παρεοῦσαν Ἀθήνην | ψευδομένου Μορρηῆος [. . .]), ‘And that bold one (i.e. Deriades) without knowing the deceitful Athena who was passing as a lying Morrheus [. . .]’). Indeed, Deriades was so stuck in his preconceived ideas of masculinity that he was unable to detect any trace of it in Dionysos. Instead, he writes Dionysos’ powers off as tricks and spells (40. 57-60). As we saw, Dionysos may seem feminine on the outside but he is no stranger to masculinity. As is seen by his brandishing of the thyrsus, and the fact that he does not even need to pierce Deriades with it in order to kill him (40. 91-2), Dionysos uses his masculine trait when and where he needs it. He does not, however, over use it like a hyper-virile male like Deriades would.

With his narrow view of the world, Deriades is unable to look past Dionysos’ feminine traits. He cannot see beyond appearances exactly because he is not predisposed to do so. This element is reinforced when Athena disguises herself as Morrheus and taunts him for his cowardice (40. 31-6). Wanting to spur Deriades into action so that Dionysos can finally defeat him, Athena transforms into a man and pokes holes into Deriades’ reasoning. As the gender fluid goddess of wisdom, she has the power to challenge Deriades’ narrowminded gender identification. With subtle undertones of alternate meaning reflected in the use of words like θωρήσσω, ἐλέγχω, and αὐτόματος, as well as with the targeted comments on marriage convention on behalf of Morrheus-Athena, Nonnos closes the Indian War with this battle scene. Given the recurring motif of gender power dynamics which permeates the *Dionysiaka* as a whole, Nonnos has ended one big portion of his story in perhaps typical Nonnian fashion; his brief description of this battle is so short because he has already said all that he needed to say before Dionysos hurled his thyrsus.

In my second section, I will discuss a case-study of one of the erotic exploits of Dionysos in order to show how gender continues to be an important theme in the later books of the epic.

Case-Study 2. When Wine Defeated the Titans

In this section I focus on Dionysos' sexual conquest of Aura, the last titan-born entity whom he defeats before he ascends to Olympos⁹⁰. I argue that her unwillingness to accept her physical body for what it is will bring about her demise at the hands of Artemis and Dionysos. Her case is peculiar because she does not fight Dionysos in relation to his godhood, but because she has been raped. In fact, she fights him not because of who he is but because of what he represents in relation to her gender identity. Aura commits a crime of hubris, not to Dionysos, but to Artemis, and is then punished for it by being raped by Dionysos. Her punisher is designated by the goddess Nemesis, at Artemis' request, and the rape is carried out by Dionysos whom Eros induces to fall in love with Aura. I attempt to illustrate that Aura's process of identifying herself in masculinity and praising her un-womanlike appearance leads her to become the voyeur of Artemis⁹¹. I argue that Nonnos' portrayal of Aura as a masculine female who equates masculinity with feminine virginity leads to the eradication of her gender identity. The literary device Nonnos uses to bring about this eradication of identity is Deception. As we shall see, Aura is deceived by Peitho and tricked into drinking from the wine spring.

Additionally, building upon on Hadjittofi's argument that Aura combines three different literary characters, I suggest a fourth new persona: that Aura becomes the voyeur of herself. After Dionysos rapes her, I argue that Aura objectifies herself and that is her punishment for objectifying

⁹⁰ For Aura as a theomachic monster see Hadjittofi 2008: 118. Hadjittofi argues that the character of Aura combines three different literary characters: the victim of a divine rape, the hubristic monster, and the hunter who becomes the hunted prey. For Aura's monstrous nature as god-defying, cf. Lightfoot 1998: 299-302 where we find similarities in narrative construction for episodes such as that with Alpus (at Book 45. 175-93, where Alpus goes on a killing spree in the countryside as Aura does at 48. 664-84) and Typhoeus (2. 305-13 where Typhoeus wishes to see the virgin goddesses pregnant just like Aura wishes at 48. 799-807). See also Lightfoot 2000: 293 who mentions that Aura is both a "female conquest and simultaneously last of his (i.e. Dionysos') great adversaries." Aura is the last enemy Dionysos faces and she is also the person to bring forth Iakkhos, Dionysos' third incarnation and a necessary step for him to ascend to Olympos.

⁹¹ For Aura as a voyeur of Artemis, see Hadjittofi 2008: 114-17.

Artemis. But, as we shall see, this is only part of her punishment the entirety of which is far more catastrophic. Furthermore, this punishment is used as the medium to bring to life Iakkhos, the third incarnation of Dionysos. This event is what completes Dionysos' journey to become a god, because like his father Zeus before him he has produced a male child⁹². Aura as a character is not the central focus within the progression of the narrative; as we shall see, her feelings and will become irrelevant. What is relevant to the story of Dionysos' quest to ascend Olympos is her becoming the mother of Iakkhos. As a titan goddess, Aura seems to pay for her ancestor's crimes and her total subjugation to Dionysos reflects his total success.

2.1 The Insult of Artemis: An Act of Hubris against Femininity

Mentioned by Nonnos as both the daughter of Kybele (1.28) and the daughter of Lelantos and Periboia (48.264), Aura is the titan goddess of the breeze. Aura is a peculiar deity in the *Dionysiaka*; she is described as diligently upholding her virginity to the point of obsession, and as taking pride in her masculine appearance. Specifically, Aura believes that virginity is only truly achieved through masculinity. This belief leads her hubristically to compare herself with Artemis and find the latter lacking in the masculine qualities of the body which prove virginity. Aura states at 48. 351-54: Ἄρτεμι, μούνον ἔχεις φιλοπάρθενον οὔνομα κούρης, | ὅτι διὰ στέρνων κεχαλασμένον ἄντυγι θηλῆς | θῆλυν ἔχεις Παφίης, οὐκ ἄρσενα μαζόν Ἀθήνης⁹³, | καὶ ῥοδέους σπινθῆρας οἰστεύουσι παρειαί. 'Artemis, you only have a girl's name akin to a virgin, for across

⁹² For this idea that Dionysos must bear a male heir so as to complete his quest of ascending Olympos, see Schmiel 1993: 470; Shorrock 2001: 142f. Both read the Aura episode as the necessary last significant feat of Dionysos to become a god. Cf. Hadjittofi 2008: 115.

⁹³ This kind of verbal incongruity ἄρσενα μαζόν may indicate Nonnos' affinity to reflect gender anomalies in his vocabulary. We find this tendency at 41. 216, for example, where we read παρθενίῳ δὲ γάλακτι for Asteria. The line refers to when Asteria nurses the baby Beroe.

your sternum you have the feminine breasts of the Paphian one, not the manly breast of Athena, and your cheeks radiate rose-like flashes'⁹⁴.

In these lines Aura describes Artemis' body with words often used to describe weaponry: the word ἄντρος generally means the round edge of something and is most often used to describe the round edges of shields or chariots⁹⁵. Nonnos, however, uses it to describe the curve of the body elsewhere too, both Europa's breasts (1. 348), and Nicaea's thighs (15.228). In addition, the word οἰστεύω generally means to hurl something and is often the verb used to describe the hurling of arrows⁹⁶; here, the word is used to describe the beauty of Artemis' rosy cheeks. With these words the female body is described as possessing weapons in the form of beauty because they are just as likely to bring the demise of men as actual weapons are⁹⁷.

On the other hand, Aura herself is described by Nonnos as possessing a tall, masculine body. A little earlier in book 48. 248-50, when Aura is first introduced, we learn that she is a

⁹⁴ Cf. 36. 48-77 where Artemis is berated again, but this time by Hera. Hera speaks in a condescending manner after Artemis' failed attempt to wound her with her arrows. In both cases Artemis is found lacking, her power proven to be either false (by Aura) or not strong enough (by Hera). Vian 2006: 149-50 finds that Artemis' arrows have been used metaphorically by other authors to refer to the pains of childbirth (Pindar *Nemeanics* 1.48, Theocr. *Idyll* 27, and 29). In this case, Hera cannot be wounded by Artemis because she too presides over childbirth.

⁹⁵ See *LSJ* ad loc. The overlap in martial and erotic language is an old one; Hes. *Th.* 178-87 describes the procreative power of Ouranos' severed genitals. After they were cut by Kronos and fell to the earth they gave birth to the elements of war (i.e. the Giants, the Ash-tree nymphs, and the Erinyes) and Aphrodite, the goddess who presides over love and sex with Eros and Himeros (Longing) as her attendants. Cf. Vernant 1990: 467. To mention only a few examples in other primary sources: Plato refers to ἔρως as an act of possession when proposing his ἀντίερος, i.e. the ἔρως in return for ἔρως in his *Phaedros* 255c-e; cf. Halperin 1990: 270. Longus (*Daphnis and Chloe* 3.20.1-2) and Heliodoros (*Aethiopica* 1.30.4) both use martial language to describe the act of sex. Aristotle too in his *Politics* 1.8.1256b20-26 claimed that warfare was set up by nature so that humans could distinguish those among themselves who are masters from those who are slaves. This motif coincides with the male domination / female submission trope seen in mythological stories and expressed by philosophers, as recorded in the above examples. Schmiel 1993: 482 points out that Nonnos' real theme, whether he is describing topics of war or sex, is violence; and violence is what characterises and defines the act of the severing of the genitals of the father by the son, as in the Ouranos-Kronos episode. From this violent act arose the elements of war and sex/love. Also, see Hernandez de la Fuente 2011a; Winkler 1974: 37-8, and D'Ippolito 2013: 292-3 on the topic of circularity and eroticism. Cf. Hadjittofi 2016: 147 for the connection between circularity and voyeurism; Hadjittofi finds that voyeurism in Nonnos is expressed with the language of circles.

⁹⁶ Cf. *LSJ* ad loc.

⁹⁷ Cf. Hadjittofi 2016: 145 on the danger Eros poses for men due to the reversal of gender power dynamics he introduces. This, she argues, is accomplished because of the deep infatuation experienced by men who are thus more susceptible to be lead astray.

κούρην ἀντιάνειραν, ἀπειρήτην Ἀφροδίτης. | Ἥ μὲν ἀνεβλάστησεν ὑπέρτερος ἥλικος ἥβης, | ἱμερτὴ ροδόπυχης, ἀεὶ χαίρουσα κολώναις· ‘a masculine girl knowing nothing of Aphrodite. And she grew up taller than her peers, lovely with rosy arms, always delighting in the hills’. The adjective ἀντιάνειρα qualifies the Amazons in Herodotus (Γ 189)⁹⁸. The word κολώνα here is perhaps of special interest. It can refer to geographical features, hills being typical of the bucolic setting which Aura inhabits, but the word can also refer to a burial mound (Sophocles’ *Elektra* 894). For Aura, the hills, or in other words the countryside, will become her tomb site, as we shall see towards the end of this section. The other word in this description that is of interest is ὑπέρτερος. I have translated ‘taller’, but the word has connotations of ‘mightier’, and ‘stronger’ and is usually used to describe the body on the outside (as opposed to σπλάχνα, ‘innards’ at *Odyssey* 3.65; 470). But the word more often describes either Nemesis, Zeus, or Dike; it may be that Nonnos is drawing on the tradition that Justice, to use the collective noun for the three deities who carry out justice, is ὑπερτέρα; that there is nothing higher or nobler than Justice. By using the word to describe Aura’s physique Nonnos is playing with the irony that though Aura looks to be taller and nobler than most, her physique will be the reason for her downfall because it will incur the wrath of Justice. The adjective may also be referring to how Aura sees herself in relation to her peers.

Indeed, Aura exhibits a certain sense of control over how her body is viewed by herself and by others. Later at 48. 361-69, we read that Aura describes her own body in contrast to Artemis’ and finds that:

Ἰλήκοι τεδὸν εἶδος· ἐγὼ σέο μᾶλλον ἀρείων· | δέρκεο πῶς μεθέπω βριαρὸν δέμας· ἠνίδε μορφήν | ἄρσενα καὶ Ζεφύροιο θοώτερον ἵχνιον Αὔρης· | δέρκεο πῶς σφριγώσι βραχίονες·

⁹⁸ Vian 2003: 156.

ἦνίδε μαζοὺς | ὄμφακας οἰδαίνοντας ἀθήλεας. Ἦ τάχα φαίης | ὅτι τεοὶ γλαγόεσαν
ἀναβλύζουσιν ἐέρσην. Πῶς παλάμην μεθέπεις ἀπαλόχροα; Πῶς σέο μαζοὶ | οὐ τίνα κύκλον
ἔχουσι περίτροχον, οἷα περ Αὔρης, | αὐτόματοι κύρηκες ἀσυλήτοιο κορείης;

‘If I may, by your stature; I am far more virile/warlike than you; look at how vigorous my body is; how manly and faster than Zephyros the footprint of Aura is; look at how strong my arms are; how unripe, my breasts are swelling in an unwomanlike manner. You would say that yours are brimming with drops of milk. How are your hands so tender? How do your breasts not possess the circular shape of Aura’s, being messengers of the untouched girls themselves?’

Notice here the repetition of the imperative δέρκεο; Aura is asking Artemis and by extension the reader to look upon her body. She is consciously telling others to look at her. Unlike most other maiden huntresses of the wild who are raped, she is the one controlling the gaze, and the meaning of what is seen. She is not gazed upon unwittingly⁹⁹. Aura understands herself to be taller, and mightier than her peers; she also believes herself to be more masculine than any other female companion, most notably even Artemis herself.

This peculiar role of Aura as commanding to be seen is tied to the fact that she sees herself as masculine. She believes that her masculinity is what gives her the freedom to remain untouched; in this, she is not wrong. Her masculine body gives her the strength she needs to defend herself, to have control over her body (how it is viewed and who can approach it) and, by extension, remain a virgin. In Aura’s eyes, Artemis’ body looks nothing like a virgin’s body. If anything, as Aura

⁹⁹ Cf. the episode at 15. 212-14 when Hymnus sees Nicaea and falls in love with her. There, the subject of the participle ἰδὼν is Hymnus. The most significant common characteristics between Nicaea and Aura are that both are virgin huntresses who spurn the attention of men and are not acquainted with the workings of Aphrodite; both react violently against experiencing Eros; and both are raped by Dionysos and give birth to his children. The significant difference between them is that by the end of their ordeals Nicaea succumbs to her fate and accepts that she has to rear Dionysos’ child while Aura does not. However, another significant difference between them is that Aura commands to be seen while Nicaea is gazed upon. For the parallels between the two stories of Nicaea and Aura see, among others, Koehler 1853: 92; Collart 1930: 262; Keydell 1937: 909; d’Ippolito 1964: 103-108. For the impact of geography on both of these stories see Rühl 1909: 50-62; Chuvin 1991: 167-70.

states, the goddess' body looks like it is the body of a female ready to be married; presumably even already married, given the image of the milk. As the titan goddess states earlier, at lines 355-58:

Ἀλλὰ δέμας μεθέπουσα ποθοβλήτοιο θεαίνης | καὶ σὺ γάμων βασίλευε σὺν ἀβροκόμῳ
Κυthereia, | δεξαμένη θαλάμοις τινὰ νυμφίον· ἦν δ' ἐθελήσης, | Ἑρμῇ παρίανε καὶ Ἄρει·
λεῖψον Ἀθήνην.

‘But, having the body of a desirous goddess, you too could preside over marriages with Kythereia of the lovely locks, accepting into your bedchamber some husband; if you would like, sleep with Hermes and Ares; forget Athena’.

Aura taunts Artemis here and commits an atrocious crime by conjuring up images of a married Artemis who sleeps with Hermes, or Ares. As a goddess, Artemis presides over unwed, prepubescent girls. She protects girls until they enter into puberty, whereupon they are married and considered to be under the auspices of Hera. However, Artemis also presides over the very negation of virginity in girls: that is, the act of giving birth. And so, just as Apollo is both the god of medicine and bringer of disease, so Artemis is both the goddess of female virginity and its lack thereof¹⁰⁰. When Aura taunts Artemis for her feminine appearance, she is taunting the very essence of femininity. Artemis' body, though virginal, is the symbol of the female procreative power. So, when Aura, from the point of view of her masculinised persona, turns her gaze to Artemis, she cannot help but descend into the act of voyeurism since it is as a voyeur that Aura looks upon the virginal body of Artemis. And once she has Artemis' body in her gaze, like other voyeurs, Aura begins to measure it¹⁰¹.

But Aura does not just look at Artemis. A little earlier, at lines 349-50, we learn that before Aura begins speaking to Artemis she touches the goddess' breasts, σχεδόθεν δέ οἱ ἀγρότις Αὔρη |

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Clay 2003: 1-11 for the role of the Olympian gods in the cosmos.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Aktaion and the language used when he too ‘measured’ Artemis' body at 5. 306.

μαζοὺς ἀμφοφώσα θεήμαχον ἴαχε φωνήν· ‘and Aura of the countryside, standing by her, having touched her breasts spoke with theomachic voice’. Here we see that theomachic Aura is transgressing the boundaries between herself and her mistress. Aura has looked at Artemis, has come near her, and has touched her; all these actions are a part of the hubris Aura commits by crossing the line. Yet Aura cannot see this. She takes pride in her masculine body and is certain that she is invincible. Though she is a female, she finds strength in the frame of her body, her arms, and her step. The bodily stature, the arms, and the legs are all points of strength and power. Indeed, we recall that Ajax had a strong, towering figure, and that Achilles had swift feet¹⁰². Aura herself is identified within this essence of airy swiftiness; she is the goddess of the breeze, and as the breeze blows swiftly about the countryside and in the forests, so Aura breezes through these places hunting like her father Lelantos¹⁰³.

In order to gain a better understanding of why Aura would be so presumptuous as to compare herself to a goddess of Artemis’ calibre let us briefly look at what her ancestry means: being of Hyperborean stock, her father was Leto’s brother and presided over the calm and silence that accompanies the good hunter. A titan himself, though a younger one, Lelantos is found, or rather not found, in the silent steps and purposeful calm that is employed by a skilled hunter in order to catch his prey. As a first cousin to Artemis, Aura hunts by her side and recognises her as her mistress, because she is the daughter of almighty Zeus; as such, Artemis outranks Aura¹⁰⁴. But, due to her own elevated pedigree, Aura thinks she can freely compare herself to Artemis and even presumes that she could be better than her cousin. This theomachic element was also displayed by Pentheus, Dionysos’ cousin. Due to their common ancestry Pentheus was presumptuous enough

¹⁰² Cf. *Il.*7.181-312 and *Il.*1.84 for Ajax and Achilles respectively.

¹⁰³ Cf. Aelian *Historical Miscellany*.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Clay 1989: 3-16 where she talks about the allotment of τιμαί, ‘honours’, or ‘share of honours’ between the Olympians divided by Zeus.

to spurn his cousin's power and doubt the legitimacy of his father. Though Aura does not doubt that Artemis is Zeus' daughter here, her critique of Artemis demeans the latter's divinity.

This power dynamic between them is what prompts Aura to commit her crime in the first place. Indeed, when Aura looks upon Artemis she does not find a virgin huntress but a married mother. In other words, what she perceives as feminine weakness. At line 367 Aura sees that Artemis possesses *παλάμην . . . ἀπαλόχροα*, 'a soft-looking hand'. It is telling too that Aura refers to Artemis' hand, not her arms. The hand is used for delicate work, whereas the arms bear the strength of the 'hand'. In order to hunt, or, in order to appear masculine, one must possess strong arms not soft hands. We understand this also because these body parts are often used to describe feminine beauty. Earlier, Aura found that Artemis had rosy cheeks, at line 354 *καὶ ῥοδέουσι σπινθῆρας ὀιστεύουσι παρειαί* 'and your cheeks shoot rosy sparks'. The cheeks, the hands, and finally, the breasts of a woman were denominators of feminine beauty which in essence means weakness¹⁰⁵. But Aura, being *ἀπειρήτην Ἀφροδίτης*, cannot see the power which lies within beauty. She only perceives power if it is physically manifested. This misperception will mean her downfall, just like Deriades' misperception embodied by Athena, meant his downfall. Artemis is described as beautiful here, but in a condescending and perverse manner, warranted in Aura's eyes by the fact that only an unfeminine looking female could prove herself to be untouched by a man¹⁰⁶. Yet, as discussed above, the reader knows from the way Nonnos refers to feminine beauty that the aesthetic elements of the female body can prove deadlier to men than weapons. This will ring true for the masculine Aura.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, *Od.* 6.101-118 where Nausikaa is described as having white arms. This episode in the *Odyssey* stresses the difference between Nausikaa and Odysseus; the danger she is in simply by talking to him is enhanced via the juxtaposition of how she looks as opposed to his appearance of grimy masculinity.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. the *αὐτόματοι κύρηκες ἀσυλήτοιο κορείης* at line 369.

Once again, sight is central to Aura's reaction. It is not enough for Aura, who takes so much pride in her status as a virgin huntress, to *claim* to be a virgin; one must also *look* like a virgin. Weakness is found when one is touched without being able to do anything about it. So far, Aura has remained untouched and she attributes this state of being to the fact that she is strong because she has a masculine type of body. Her masculine body has given her the strength to run alongside Artemis, to become a formidable huntress in her own right, and not to have been subdued by male aggression. What is more, her masculine body has also lead her to act as a male herself when she approached Artemis and touched her.

Her perception, however, of gender through sight and physical appearance has led her astray. Her body, unripe as she calls it, has given her a false sense of security in all its roughness and strength. Nonnos' tendency to verbally reflect gender anomalies should be noted when Aura refers to Artemis' breasts as seemingly ready to spurt out milk, at lines 364-66 ἡνίδε μαζοῦς | ὄμφοκακας οἰδαίνοντας ἀθήλεια. Ἡ τάχα φαίης, | ὅτι τεοὶ γλαγόεσσιν ἀναβλύζουσιν ἐέρσην. 'look how like unripe grapes my breasts swell un-womanlike. For indeed you would think that yours (i.e. breasts) are filling up to the brim with drops of milk'. These lines reflect the error in Aura's thought: Artemis is virginal and not motherly. There is a tendency in Nonnos' poetry to reflect tensions of gender identity in his language. Verbal contradictions correspond to physical contradictions. Nonnos creates tension between what is and what appears to be. In this case, though Artemis is not a mother, she appears to be in Aura's eyes. The conditional passage verbally reflects Aura's false perception of reality¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ Note that Artemis was worshipped in Ephesos as a female fertility goddess. Her eastern equivalent was the goddess Kybele, and she is described as πότνια θηρῶν, 'mistress of animals' as early as Homer *Il.*21.470. A statue of Artemis in the Artemision, which most likely served as the ξόανον of the temple was adorned with what may be breasts, udders, or even bull-scrota. As LiDonnici 1992: 395 states, the statue of Artemis Ephesia "stands as a central symbol for the goddess, the city, and the people".

By insinuating that Artemis is a mother, Aura underhandedly insults her in the worst possible way. As was stated earlier, Artemis is the goddess of female virginity. And as the Olympian gods were thought to be presiding over opposite elements, Artemis is also the goddess of the *absence* of female virginity. However, Artemis' godhood only extends as far as the act of giving birth; indeed, she is not the goddess of motherhood itself. Artemis is the goddess of female sexuality whether it is virginal or not, but she is not a mother goddess per se. By extension she does not preside over mothers. Her domain is feminine sexuality and its potential to produce life, but it is not the *realisation* of that potential. As such, when Aura accuses Artemis of motherhood she is not only highly disrespectful, she is also misdirected. From where she is standing, Artemis appears to her with the body of a mother; and that is what twists her perspective of power. At the same time, she eroticises the image of Artemis by suggesting that she has taken Hermes or Ares as her lovers, emphasized also by the fact that she touches Artemis' body; the erotic element thus becomes tangible¹⁰⁸.

2.2 The Body and the Gaze: Dissonance and Reflection

To summarize the argument thus far, Aura's inability to accept her own body, and the female body in general as symbolized by Artemis, for what it *is* (i.e. able to produce offspring) and not for what it *looks like* (i.e. the effect it might have in an erotic context) will bring about her demise. In the next half of the book, Aura is punished for her pride in her perceived masculinity because it is at odds with her physical nature. No matter how masculine she appears, Aura is still a female. No matter how unripe, she still has breasts (μαζοὺς in line 364). Even though they are

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 48. 90-171 where Nonnos describes the wrestling match between Dionysos and Pallene, as well as 10. 399-430 where he describes the wrestling between Dionysos and Ampelos. On both of those occasions, rough touch is seen as erotic interplay between two characters. For the erotic nature of rough touch in these scenes cf. Newbold 1984: 95.

ὄμφακας οἰδαίνοντας ἀθήλεας ‘unripe, swelling in an unfeminine way’ at line 365, they are still a woman’s breasts. And though her view of her own body leads her to claim at line 369 that her breasts are αὐτόματοι κήρυκες ἀσυλήτοις κορείης, ‘immediate messengers of an untouched girl’, when her punishment ensues they still produce the milk of a mother. What is more, she is dubbed ‘woman’, γύναι, at line 760 and then again at line 769 by Artemis who comes to taunt her. In the first instance she is called a γύναι φυγόμενε, ‘oh woman who avoids marriage’, and in the second she is called γύναι βαρύφορτε, ‘oh woman who carries a heavy burden’. This repetition of the word γύναι serves to devastate her even more because a γυνή, a woman, is someone who has been tamed by male domination. With this word we are reminded of the negative connotations known well from Hesiod¹⁰⁹. But we also see how Nonnos incorporates tensions between gender and the biological sex; by having Artemis call out to Aura with a word which describes the female societal role, Nonnos presents a worldview which does not allow for masculinised females. A world where sooner or later all females will have to submit to a male; where no matter how strong they are, there will always be a male who is stronger¹¹⁰. Even Artemis, who is the eternal virgin, invokes images of motherhood due to her biological form.

Submitting to male domination is what Aura despises most of all. And indeed, the first appellation γύναι φυγόμενε refers to her ‘marriage’ to Dionysos, while the second γύναι βαρύφορτε refers to her state of being heavy with child¹¹¹. Though she is a titan goddess, Aura is here called ‘woman’; this is interesting as a concept because normally this word is used to distinguish immortal from mortal females in Hesiod. Goddesses are seldom, if ever dubbed as

¹⁰⁹ Hesiod *Th.*585-611, and *W&D.*60-82 prototypically speaks of γυνή as the ‘woman/wife’ brought into being solely for the purposes of procreation.

¹¹⁰ In the world of Nonnos’ *Dionysiaka*, even Artemis, who is the eternal virgin, invokes images of motherhood due to her biological form (48. 351-78; 365-69).

¹¹¹ I put the word marriage in hyphens because Aura is not actually married to Dionysos. However, the fact that he raped her, or, in other words, sexually tamed her, points to the use of the language of marriage here.

‘women’; that term is reserved for their mortal counterparts who were created in order to become the wives of men. Pandora being the first of their race, as they are called by Hesiod, ‘women’ are defined as those mortal females who were created in order to serve a specific purpose. By calling out to Aura with the word ‘woman’ here, Artemis drives Aura’s punishment home. According to an allegorical reading I would suggest that Aura is being taunted not by Artemis per se; the significance of this taunt is found in what Artemis represents. Female sexuality itself is reminding Aura of what she truly is. Just like with Deriades’ punishment, Nonnos employs a great deal of ironic undertones to describe Aura’s punishment.

As such, it is important to note here that Aura being called γύναι is only condescending to Aura herself. Especially if we consider that γυνή can be used as a term of insult to men, like in *Iliad* 8. 163; for a goddess who had touted her masculinity, this term brings a similar insult. What is more, being forced to bear children is the ultimate punishment not of womankind, necessarily, but of Aura specifically. Nonnos has carefully chosen his words here; Aura’s ἀθήλεας breasts, at first glance unfit to carry out their purpose of nursing younglings, are now forced to do exactly that. While, on the contrary, Artemis’ breasts, which are described as ‘dripping out drops of milk’ (γλαγρόεσσιν ἀναβλύζουσι ἑέρσην, at line 366) never actually drip any milk.

Being or appearing too feminine is treated as a defect elsewhere in the poem too, from characters who prize and praise masculine traits such as physical strength¹¹². This obsession with masculinity also ultimately leads to demise¹¹³. The characters that are loyal to masculinity like Deriades and Aura have their beliefs crushed by the very thing they despise: femininity. Deriades is grazed by the thyrsus of Dionysos, who, the king has claimed, is too soft and feminine. Aura is

¹¹² Cf. the way Orotnes (17. 171-189) and Morrheus (36. 469) treat Dionysos when they first meet him on the battlefield; they scorn him because he looks soft like a woman. The phrases used by them are: ὁ θῆλον ἔχων ἀπαλόον χρῶα (17. 185), and θηλυμανής (36. 469) respectively.

¹¹³ Both Morrheus (39. 354-6) and Orontes (17. 287-9) are ultimately beaten by the feminine looking Dionysos.

raped by him. *Her* demise, though carried out by Dionysos, is set up by femininity in the form of Artemis who asks Nemesis to deliver Aura's punishment for taunting her. Yet, given Dionysos' femininity, Aura's punishment is described in terms of poetic justice; femininity itself (i.e. Artemis) sent an effeminate male (i.e. Dionysos) to punish prideful yet false masculinity (i.e. Aura).

Whatever the case may be regarding Nonnos' views on masculinity, we see that, given her peculiarity of connecting feminine virginity with masculinity, Aura's punishment involves a grotesque self-reflection. Due to her initial role as Artemis' voyeur, or, in other words, as the voyeur of femininity itself, Aura is punished for this transgression by becoming the voyeur of herself. If we look at 48. 654-58 we can detect the same language of voyeurism when Aura wakes up from her wine-induced sleep and looks at the evidence of her rape as it appears on her body:

Θάμβεε δ' εἰσορόωσα σαόφρονος ἔκτοθι μήτρης | στήθεα γυμνωθέντα καὶ ἀσκεπέος πτύχα
μηροῦ· | καὶ γαμῖη ραθάμιγγι περιστιχθέντα χιτῶνα, | ἄρπαμένην ἀνάεδνον ἀπαγγέλοντα
κορείην, | μαίνεται παπταίνουσα·

‘With surprise, looking at the bare breasts outside of her modest girdle, and the fold of her uncovered thigh, and her chiton peppered with the wedding drops, all denoting the capture of a girl without bridal gifts, looking frantically around herself, she became furious’.

Aura looks down at her ravaged body and takes note of her breasts, thighs, and uncovered womanhood; those parts of the body are what a voyeur sees when they gaze upon their ‘victim’¹¹⁴. Even though Aura does not feel attracted to her body when she sees it in the aftermath of rape, I would suggest that she is so far removed from its realness, from what it truly is, that she seems to see it for the first time. It is as if she stumbled upon it unknowingly and was forced to become

¹¹⁴ Cf. Newbold 1984: 94n.20; he mentions that “Voyeurism permits a controlled yet voracious scrutiny of revealed truths or secrets.”

privity to knowledge she did not possess before. In terms of gender, Aura never viewed herself as a traditional female, who was to be married off and become a mother. Her lifestyle choices as a virgin huntress had precedent in the company of Artemis. However, that which is the focus here is that Aura could not seem to accept her biological sex. Taking pride in how unwomanlike her body appeared, she conveniently disregarded the fact that she is in fact biologically female. Indeed, Nonnos seems to be more interested in exploring the tensions created by Aura's self-identification based on her physicality more than anything¹¹⁵.

Aura's rape is the event that turns her into something with which she is completely unfamiliar. Her rape is enough to eradicate her sense of self because the pregnancy which results from it is the ultimate proof that Aura is not who she thinks she is. Indeed, she is forced to revise her earlier self-identification. Both words *θαμβέω* and *παπταίνουσα* convey her utter incomprehension of how this could have happened to her despite her strength. She is looking around her to try and find the one who violated her. But of course, by this time Dionysos has disappeared. It is, however, made clear that the only reason he was able to rape her in the first place was because she had drunk wine and was intoxicated. This element of the narrative serves to enhance Aura's surprise; she was indeed formidable. Only by intoxicating her could Dionysos attempt to conquer her. At line 594 we read *Ἀλλ' ὅτε Βακχείην ἀπατήλιον ἔδρακε πηγὴν*, 'But when she saw the deceiving Bacchic spring'. This is the beginning of the episode of Aura's rape. A little further down at lines 626-7 we read [. . .] *καὶ τόξα κατέκρυψε κοιλάδι πέτρῃ, | μή μιν οἰστεύσειε τιναξαμένη πτερὸν Ὕπνου*. '[. . .] and he (i.e. Dionysos) hid the arrows in a hole in the rocks lest she shoot him with them should she (Aura) shake off the feather of Sleep'. We see here

¹¹⁵ It is noteworthy too, that even after she is raped Aura is still found hunting in the countryside albeit in a twisted, macabre context (48. 662-68).

that Dionysos, even though Aura is intoxicated and asleep, still takes extra precautions. From this it may be inferred that in direct combat Aura posed a threat to Dionysos.

Aura was so powerful, so sure of herself and of her masculine traits that her punishment must be meticulously organised. As the goddess of retribution, Nemesis makes sure that Aura's punishment is carried out (461-65 we hear [. . .] ἀμφὶ δὲ μήτρην | παρθενικῆς ἐλέλιζεν ἐχιδνήεσσαν ἱμάσθλην | Ἀργολὶς Ἀδρήστεια. Χαριζομένη δὲ θεαίνῃ | καὶ μάλα περ κοτέοντι κασιγνήτῳ Διονύσῳ | ὥπλισεν ἄλλον ἔρωτα, [. . .], '[. . .] and around the girdle of the virgin girl Argive Adrasteia curled the whip with the vipers. By doing a favor to the goddess [i.e. Artemis] and also indeed for her indignant brother Dionysos, she prepared another love'). Then by calling upon Eros, she arranges for Dionysos to fall in love with her, to be consumed with insatiable lust for her, and to set off to pursue her (471-2 [. . .] Ἀμφὶ δὲ κόρυη | ἡδυβόλῳ Διόνυσον Ἔρως οἷστροησεν οἷστῳ, 'And for the girl, Eros shot Dionysos with a lust-bringing arrow'). To complete this image of Eros taking a hold of the situation and becoming the harbinger of Nemesis for Aura, Peitho too appears to lure Aura to the 'deceitful spring' of gushing wine (595 we read δὴ τότε οἱ βλεφάρων σκιάεν νέφος ἤλασε Πειθῶ, 'and then Peitho lifted the shadowy mist from her [i.e. Aura's] eyelids'). A little earlier, at 591 Eros had covered Aura's eyelids with mist (ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ βλεφάροισιν Ἔρως κατέχευεν ὁμίχλην). The hunter thus has become the hunted. Having her eyesight impaired Aura stumbles about into the woods and comes upon something dangerous¹¹⁶. In this case it is the spring

¹¹⁶ This is following the trope of the Voyeur who unwittingly finds himself cut off from the world that he knows only to come upon something that puts him at risk. Usually this dangerous element is considered to be fatally 'evil' for the voyeur because it is powerful enough to strip him of his position in life in the world that he knows and comes from. Cf. the hunter Aktaion, who stumbled upon a bathing Artemis only to be transformed into a deer himself and be torn to pieces by his own hound dogs (*Dion.* 5. 299-369). Another example of the danger that exists in the realm of gods and monsters for mortals who stray too far from their own boundaries may be detected in the case of Hylas, Herakles' favourite attendant. He had gone to search for water during a stopover for the Argonauts and without knowing stumbled upon a spring of water inhabited by Nymphs. They fell in love with him and snatched him into the watery depths to be with them forever.

of wine which will prove dangerous to her (590 κεῖθι δὲ διψώουσα μεσημβριὰς ἔτρεχεν Αὔρη¹¹⁷, ‘there Aura rushed at midday, thirsty.’).

When the mist lifts from her eyes by the work of Peitho, it is symbolic of the success of Eros’ trap; Aura has been convinced to drink from this spring because she is led to believe that it is the only spring around her that will satiate her thirst. In fact, her thirst is integral to the success of the trap (592-3 εἰ ποθὶ διψώουσα Διὸς χύσιν ἢ τινα πηγὴν | ἢ ῥόον ἀθρήσειεν ὀρεσσιχύτου ποταμοῖο· ‘thirsty as she was, she looked for raindrops of Zeus, or some spring, or the rushes of a river flowing from the mountain’). She is frantically looking about for some source of drinkable water and, before she finds the wine-flowing spring, her eyes are deceived and thus made to believe that this odd source of liquid will sate her thirst. And so, mind made up, Peitho comes to lift the haze from her eyes and mind. Her eyesight though recovered is not helping her see the truth because, thanks to Eros’ deception, her mind’s eye sees what it wants to see. Her loss of sight is particularly loaded in this passage, given the importance of sight and appearance for her earlier conception of gender. For the voyeur who is about to be punished, the first indication is her not being able to see the object of voyeurism¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ It is, I think, significant that the time of day is midday because this time was believed to belong to the gods and many transgressions into the realm of the dangerous supernatural were believed to happen during midday. In Theocritus’ *Idyll 1* 15-17 we learn that making noise during midday is dangerous because that is when the god Pan rests. In Plato’s *Phaedrus* 229a-231a we see that due to the time of day and year, noon during the summer, Phaedrus and Socrates set out to find a tree under which to sit to avoid the heat; as they are walking towards it, they talk about the truth behind the story of Boreas carrying off Oreithyia from the banks of the river Ilissus. In other words, the time of day and their location permits for a discussion on whether or not a female was abducted by a male; this adheres to the danger motif for the person who is where he or she should not be. Cf. Hunter 1999: 74 n.15-18. The fact too that Artemis stops to bathe after the hunt at midday (48. 303-308) after which Aura then commits her crime is another instance where things go horribly wrong for the transgressor. There might not be direct allusion by Nonnos to texts about bad things happening during midday, but it is certainly a point worthy of consideration; the common characteristic of the time of day may be an indicator of a broader tradition to which people used to adhere.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Winkler 1974: 4-17 who notes that usually the divide between the voyeur’s vision and imagination is blurred. Even though Aura is not a voyeur in this passage, it is noteworthy that she loses her sight and sees what she wants to see.

Nemesis' plan is nearly completed; everything is prepared for Dionysos to approach Aura and overcome her. As we have seen he does take extra precautions to protect himself from her, but they prove unnecessary. Aura is thoroughly incapacitated. And so, just like other voyeurs and transgressors before her (like Aktaion or Hylas) Aura falls into a god's trap at midday and subsequently loses her position in the world she has grown up in. Looking down at her naked, and disheveled body, she does not recognise it. Being surprised to find that she looks like something she was not expecting, and frantically looking about to find the reason for this change, Aura does not realise that the source of her misfortune is her own hubristic behavior. Her crime against Artemis was a crime against femininity. Dionysos was only made to fall in love with her after Nemesis brought forth her punishment; as such, Dionysos himself is seen as a pawn in the greater scheme of things. Nonnos' world in the text cannot allow for the existence of an arrogant masculine female like Aura. Even though Dionysos was the one to rape her, it is clearly demonstrated within the text that his will was not all his. Eros even coaxes him to go to the place where Aura is sleeping (616 we hear Eros' eerie taunt Ἀγρώσσεις, Διόνυσε; Μένει δέ σε παρθένος Αὔρη. 'Up for a hunt, Dionysos? Virgin Aura is waiting for you').

And yet one wonders why Aura's punishment is so thorough. The goddesses Nemesis, Peitho, and the god Eros, all external forces take turns in enacting her punishment. The fact that it involves a meticulous plan points, I think, to the significance of Aura's rape for Dionysos' overall goal to ascend Olympos. This rape produces Iakkhos, the third Dionysos, and this birth is necessary for Dionysos' success. It is telling of Dionysos' omnipotence in the poem that, although he does not lay the trap himself, he benefits from it the most. It also seems significant that the third Dionysos is born from a mother who was highly masculine; indeed, Aura's peculiar character as a masculinised female provides a counterpoint to Dionysos' effeminacy, as two characters with

conflicted gender identities come together in physical union. Aura is thus presented as an important character, though she is still subjected to Dionysos' power.

Intoxication, the medium of the rape, also symbolizes the union of Aura and Dionysos. Wine, a symbol of dejectedness in and of itself, presupposes that the person consuming the liquid is then ready to become ἔνθεος, ready to receive the god in him¹¹⁹. This process means that the person, the consciousness existing within the person who drinks from Dionysos' liquid, is put aside, outside of himself and is possessed by the god. By being impregnated with the help of wine, getting drunk and falling asleep from the intoxicating effects of the beverage, Aura becomes the perfect vessel to receive Dionysos in her own body. And this fact allows for Dionysos' ultimate success; he has made his titan enemies (i.e. Aura as their descendent) bring him (i.e. his third incarnation Iakkhos) into being. This, in a sense, resolves the tension between him and the Titans which started during his first incarnation as Zagreus. By raping an intoxicated Aura, Dionysos triumphs over those who have constantly opposed him, producing a son who carries both the lineage of the Olympians and the lineage of the Titans. The birth of Iakkhos by Aura symbolises the utter subjugation of the titan race to Dionysos' gender-fluid rule.

Aura's consumption of one of the twins born of the union is also telling of her masculine and titanic nature. The threat she possesses is twofold; first her procreative power is able to produce the third incarnation of Dionysos; then her masculinity is displayed when she devours her offspring in an attempt to re-merge herself with the child that was born from her and represents Dionysos'

¹¹⁹ Cf. Dodds 1960: xiii; Dodds also mentions that apart from wine, there are other ways in which one can become ἔνθεος. Specifically, he refers to the practice of ὄρειβασία, 'mountain dancing', as he translates it. This is telling because when Aura is tricked into drinking the wine, she is in the mountains. There seem to be common tropes when discussing occurrences where a god, in this case Dionysos, enters the body of others, either through wine consumption or dancing in the mountains. Cf. Frazer 1994: 248; Benedict 1989: 85. Cf. Seaford 2006: 20 where he mentions that during the Anthestiria in Athens, a festival dedicated to Dionysos, the god was believed to appear miraculously from a spring of wine. There are some points of contact here with the way Nonnos describes Aura's consumption of wine. The epiphany of the god in both cases seems to be directly tied to the presence of wine.

power. This is characteristic of the masculine trait of the old gods who devoured their children so as to avoid being dethroned by them. Both Kronos and Zeus commit this act, but for Aura the meaning is slightly different¹²⁰. Aura wishes to be her own person, as she was before she became a mother and by doing so she unwittingly challenges Dionysos' right to godhood just like her forefathers had done when they devoured Zagreus. She wants to be isolated, to exist in the peripheral, in the margins of the world, while Kronos and Zeus wanted to remain in the cosmological centre of things as rulers of the universe.

What is more, her punishment as the titan to oppose a trait which exists within Dionysos himself, femininity, is completed when she turns into a spring and is made to be the object of voyeurism. As she was voyeur of Artemis at first and then of herself, she is now made into a spring which will be looked at forevermore. She now becomes the victim of voyeurism by anyone who comes by her. This is encapsulated in the description of the transformation at lines 935-42, where we read

[. . .] Τὴν δὲ Κρονίων | εἰς κρήνην μετὰμειψεν· ὀρεσσιχύτοιο δὲ πηγῆς | μαζοὶ κρουνὸς ἔην,
προχοὴ δέμας, ἄνθεα χαῖται, | καὶ κέρας ἔπλετο τόξον ἐγκραίρου ποταμοῖο | ταυροφυές,
καὶ σχοῖνος ἀμειβομένη πέλε νευρή, | καὶ δόνακες γεγαῶτες ἐπερροΐζησαν ὀιστοί, | καὶ
βυθὸν ἰλυόεντα διεσσυμένη ποταμοῖο | εἰς γλαφυρὸν κευθμῶνα χυτὴ κελάρυζε φάρετρη.

‘[. . .] And Kronion turned her into a spring; her breasts became the spouts of mountain-flowing water, her body became the stream, her hair became the flowers, and her bow became the bullhorn of the well-horned river, and changing, the bowstring became the rush, and the arrows changing shape, turned into reeds, and the quiver having sunk to the hollow, deep muddy floor of the river murmured, pouring forth water’.

¹²⁰ For Kronos swallowing his children from Rhea so as not to lose his cosmic throne to them see Hesiod *Th.* 453-65. For Zeus devouring his first wife Metis, pregnant with his child and destined to dethrone him, see *Th.* 886ff.

The use of the words *μαζοὶ*, *δέμας*, and *χαῖται*, here, ‘breasts’, ‘body’ or ‘skin’, and ‘hair’ respectively, is subtly indicative of the language of voyeurism, underlying now the feminine qualities of Aura¹²¹. Here, for Aura, the roles are reversed. She becomes the object of voyeurism and will be gazed at as a feminine object not, as we saw earlier, by her own self, but by others who might come upon her. Forever flowing fertile water, Aura as a spring will be viewed as the lifegiving source of wet nourishment just like any other mother¹²². The image of her breasts becoming spouts of water recalls the lactating breasts of a mother nourishing her youngling; the image of her body turning into the stream recalls erotic connotations of the wet physical body in the bath; and lastly the image of her hair turning into the flowers found at the banks of a river spring is evocative of beauty¹²³. The three points of the nude body are also points of aesthetic admiration for female nudity as it is found in abandon. Visible breasts, uncovered body and loose hair all construct an image of erotic fantasy perceived when the voyeur encounters the object of their gaze.

Furthermore, when Aura’s bow, arrows, and quiver are also turned into elements of a river spring, i.e. the river bend, the riverbank reeds, and the spout of the entire spring respectively, the reader gets the sense of the complete annihilation of Aura’s hunter identity. Her identity as a huntress was what previously protected her from voyeurs; now, her identity has been completely

¹²¹ Elsewhere too, in the *Dionysiaka* the context of voyeurism is expressed with the use of the same words for the bodily parts that the voyeur sees; cf. 5. 299-315 where Aktaion sees Artemis bathing and ‘measures’ the goddess’ *δέμας*, ‘body’, or ‘skin’. When Artemis takes note of him she rushes to cover her *μαζοὺς*, ‘breasts’. Even though, in this case, Aktaion is not described as specifically looking at Artemis’ breasts, the narrator does not neglect to mention them.

¹²² For the connection between the element of water and the realization of fears in Nonnos’ *Dionysiaka* cf. Newbold 2001.

¹²³ Flowers are a symbol of fertility just like hair is a symbol of fertility. Nice looking hair denotes health which in turn denotes fertility. Flowers too are the fertile part of the plant. Aura thus, has been turned into something that will continue to showcase fertility. It is as if she is punished even after her death. By dying in the masculine river, she turns into something which she would have despised: the symbol of feminine fertility ad infinitum. Cf. Vian 2003: 210 who claims that after her transformation into a spring within the river “La virile Aura sera ainsi entièrement féminisée”. Cf. also Newbold 2000: 18 who talks about how Aura’s “maternal feminization becomes complete when she is turned into a fountain and her breasts jet forth water forever”.

inverted. Instead it facilitates voyeurs by delineating her form and providing the setting for her to be gazed upon. Indeed, Aura's punishment is not complete until Zeus turns her into this spring, for in the next line we read that Artemis' anger was stilled once the transformation was completed (line 943 Καὶ χόλον ἰοχέαιρα κατεύνασεν, 'And the archeress calmed her anger'). Aura's punishment has been so thorough, so destructive that it incites a peculiar sense of pity in the reader¹²⁴. Being the voyeur of the goddess, she is not only punished to be the object of voyeurism herself; before that happens, she is forced to become something she loathes all the while directing her voyeuristic gaze at herself. Abuse and misperception of gender fluidity results in various consequences: ironic (as we saw for Case-Study 1), and retributive (for Case-Study 2).

¹²⁴ Cf. Schmiel 1993: 473 for the idea that the Aura episode is mostly intended to affect the reader.

2.3 Conclusion

In this section I have explored elements of gender in the erotic episode of Dionysos and Aura. In a similar if somewhat different way to the Deriades episode, the problematizing of gender is a central element in Dionysos' victory and progression towards Olympos. Whereas Deriades' punishment was to be infused in a world of ironic contempt by Dionysos and his followers, Aura's was to be eradicated entirely by her association with him. I hope to have shown that the character of Aura is used in very specific ways by Nonnos to highlight Dionysos' success. She is the titan-born entity who gives birth to Iakkhos, Dionysos' third incarnation on Earth. I hope to have illustrated the significance of this episode for the overall story of Dionysos' ascension to godhood. I have traced the importance of Aura as a character in the *Dionysiaka* to her lineage and to her hubristic behaviour towards Artemis. As another goddess to blur gender roles much like Athena, Artemis is a significant gender-fluid goddess who inhabits Dionysos' gender-fluid universe. Aura on the other hand, is the titan entity who challenges gender fluidity as it is incorporated in Artemis.

Nonnos has presented a female character who praises and prizes masculinity, much like Deriades. She will be punished for this due to narrowmindedness. Her punishment is described by Nonnos in a similar way with Deriades. Just as his corpse was pierced and thus feminised, so Aura will be the object of voyeurism until the end of time and thus be feminised herself. However, her feminization started when she was raped and will continue even after her death. I hope to have shown in this second section of my thesis that, in order to enhance this element of Aura becoming the object of voyeurism, Nonnos has described how Aura herself is the first to see her body in such a light. With the language of voyeurism, Nonnos directs Aura's voyeuristic gaze from Artemis' body to her own. He has delivered Aura's absolute demise by describing her rape as the

punishment sent by Nemesis to appease Artemis for Aura's hubristic behaviour. Nonnos has thus realised her intrinsic femininity in these two grotesque actions.

Thesis Conclusion

I hope to have shown throughout this thesis that gender fluidity is an important factor when considering the success of Dionysos and his ascension to Olympos. Existing within the spectrum that is gender and triumphing over gender-rigidity, Dionysos inaugurates an era where gender fixity is challenged and put aside. With the help of two goddesses who blur the lines of normative gender behaviour, Athena and Artemis, Dionysos succeeds in his quest to become a god. He earns his position at Zeus' table by checking the extremes on the gender spectrum who threaten him and his rule.

For my first case-study, I have explored the significance of Nonnos' ironic undertones and his focus on gendered vocabulary and themes when describing the defeat of the Indian king Deriades. I hope to have illustrated the connections between Nonnos' subtle irony and the theme of Deriades' gender identification. I have found that deception and disguise serve as Nonnos' literary tropes to describe the demise of the Indian king at the hands of Dionysos and Athena. Fearing Dionysos' ability to change his bodily form, Deriades flees from his fight with the viny god, only to be halted by Athena disguised as Morrheus. Athena cunningly chooses Deriades' son in law as her mask in order to better chastise Deriades for his cowardice and inspire him to return to battle. She stands for the Truth/Wisdom one needs to fully understand reality. Her strategy involves leading Deriades astray by fueling him with the might to attack Dionysos so that the latter can finally win the war. Athena knows that Dionysos will win and so lays her plan artfully. With carefully selected jibes and insults, Athena succeeds in degrading Deriades: she mentions Orsiboe, his wife, whom has participated in the war and has not fled battle (40. 12-14) thus challenging his place among his people as a warrior-king; then, Morrheus-Athena mentions his daughter, Cheirobie, and proceeds to inform Deriades of his/her disgust at having been tied to a wife of such

shamed lineage (40. 22-4) thus challenging his integrity as a true man; she then takes this point further by outright telling him that he would be happier to capture and marry some Amazon who at least would be his match in terms of battlefield conduct (40. 25-30). Athena thus has effectively turned the hyper-virile Deriades into a cowardly and deceitful man, unworthy of his title.

Having thus set the stage for the impending final battle between Dionysos and Deriades, Nonnos then uses the words *θωρήσω*, *ἐλέγχω*, and *αὐτόματος* to describe Deriades' return to battle and demise (at 40. 57-60 for the two verbs, and 40. 95-6 for the adjective). As I hope to have shown, these words reflect Deriades' innermost, intrinsically faulty thoughts; the first has a double meaning, describing both the arming of oneself and inebriation. The second proves pointless since Deriades cannot test Dionysos' contrived falsehoods and spells by virtue of these being non-existent; Dionysos is neither a sorcerer nor a trickster. His chaotic warfare reflected in his various transformations on the battlefield, echo his chaotic divine essence. And finally, the third word used to describe Deriades' fate after he has been killed by Dionysos is the word to encompass the greatest amount of mockery on behalf of Nonnos; for all his enormous size, Deriades' main accomplishment, as far as this episode is concerned, has been to bridge the riverbanks of his father, the river-god Hydaspes. Nonnos takes this debasement of Deriades further when in the following lines he describes the insult of Deriades' corpse by Dionysos' Bacchants (40. 99-100).

For my second case-study, I have examined the possibility that Aura's obsession with her virginity and unripe femininity (which she views as masculinised femininity) has led her to commit a crime of hubris to Artemis, the goddess of femininity personified. Having thus incurred the wrath of Artemis, Aura's punishment is determined by Nemesis and carried out by Dionysos. Yet, as we have seen, things are not as simple as that. Indeed, Nemesis employs both Eros and Peitho in order to set the scene for Aura's punishment. Eros is sent to make Dionysos fall in love with Aura and

be overcome by lust for her (48. 471-2) as well as impair Aura's vision so she comes upon the stream of wine (48. 591); while Peitho is sent to persuade Aura to drink from the stream of wine (48. 595). This is orchestrated due to Aura's power; it is thus insinuated that in direct combat with Dionysos, Aura stands a good chance of emerging as the winner (like we saw at 48. 625-30 where Dionysos fearing that Aura might wake up from her wine-induced sleep, hides her bow and arrows and then binds her for good measure). This stands in opposition to the treatment of Deriades. There, as we saw, Dionysos only needed to graze the king with his thyrsus to kill him. Aura's defeat is much more complicated than that and involves more deities and a more thorough plan of deceit; whereas Deriades was fooled by Athena's disguise, Aura is deceived in a more profound way, as indicated by the presence of the goddess Peitho. Aura needs to consume wine, a substance she would not normally drink, and this is why Peitho's powers are needed.

The complexity of Aura's defeat is also reflected in the multiple layers of her downfall. Indeed, I hope to have shown that her punishment is threefold: on the one hand, her rape forces her to realise her femininity by carrying and giving birth to Dionysos' twins (48. 851-5). Secondly, the realisation of her rape has directed her voyeuristic gaze upon herself; by using the same reference points as a voyeur, Nonnos describes Aura's self-reflection (48. 654-8). And thirdly, her punishment is only completed when Zeus transforms Aura into a spring; this act culminates Aura's feminisation as again through the use of the same reference points of a voyeur's gaze Nonnos describes Aura's new state of being as forever being looked upon by others. He uses words like *μαζοί*, *δέμας*, and *χαῖται* (48. 935-42), which describe points of female beauty. Her identity by the end of the episode is completely eradicated. Thus, in this second section, I have examined the possibility that Aura's excessive maltreatment is tied to the fact that as a titan born entity she must submit to Dionysos completely before he is able to ascend to Olympos. By fathering Iakkhos

through Aura, Dionysos has successfully mitigated his third incarnation on Earth. He has defeated the titans once and for all by combining his lineage with theirs.

As was stated in the Introduction, in this thesis I have only highlighted the two instances where Dionysos' gender-fluidity has been instrumental to his success. In dealing with the masculine extreme on the gender spectrum, as expressed by a male and a female, Dionysos has overcome two of his great adversaries. More work needs to be done before we completely understand all the ways in which Nonnos deals with Dionysos' gender identity within the *Dionysiaka*. Characters who oppose or aid him and who can be found at other points along the gender spectrum have been necessarily overlooked in this paper but may provide room for additional research. For example, the gendered connotations of women both aiding and fighting Dionysos as personified in his Maenads and the Indian queen and princess (Orsiboe and Cheirobie respectively) may be further explored. Or perhaps the significance of the help provided by the masculine, but not hyper-virile Nemesis may be brought into focus, especially considering her relationship with Artemis in this episode. Artemis herself poses an interesting question as to whether or not her Ephesian extension has a special connection to Dionysos as an initiate of Kybele's mysteries. On the other hand, further examination of the instance where Eros inspires lust in Dionysos is needed if we consider the special relationship between Eros and Dionysos in the *Dionysiaka*. The question of whether or not the Eros-Phanes of the Orphics may be identified with Dionysos himself in Nonnos' lengthy text shines a new and intriguing light on this erotic episode with Aura.

Nevertheless, with this thesis I hope to have added to the growing scholarship on the role of gender in Nonnos' *Dionysiaka*. By examining the two case-studies of Deriades and Aura, I

attempted to illustrate the importance of Dionysos' gender-fluid identity for our understanding of the inner workings and subtle nuances of the text.

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